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Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

JANUARY 2001

# America @work

ISSUE America.  
COUNT every VOTE  
— AFL-CIO

Justice



## ALSO INSIDE:

Bigger, Faster,  
Better Organizing

The Worst  
of Two Worlds

Ergonomics Update



**"I NEARLY CRIED** last night when I saw how the unions delivered key states to Vice President Gore. My father was a staunch union member and supporter during his lifetime and he would have been so proud. I was a member of the National Federation of Federal Employees and quit after having personal differences, but am seriously considering rejoining...that is how much you impressed me with your voter turnout. *Bravo and thank God for the unions!*"—*Jeanne Horse, Chadron, Neb.*

## SAY WHAT?

### How has your union increased organizing?

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's *Say What?* Selected responses will appear in a future issue.  
**America@work**, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; phone: 202-637-5010; fax: 202-508-6908; e-mail: [atwork@afcio.org](mailto:atwork@afcio.org)

## HERE'S WHAT YOU SAY

### ABOUT HOW YOUR UNION IS REACHING OUT TO NONMEMBERS IN OPEN SHOPS:

"Organize or die! The United Brotherhood of Carpenters is reaching out to carpenters and communities in an effort to improve working conditions for everyone. For too long, we were an island with decreasing membership. But thanks to the vision of Doug McCarron, general president, that has changed. As a union, we're working to develop serious organizing programs and have hired more than 500 organizers nationwide....We've put our time, resources and energy into organizing. In a word, our vision for the new century is *organize*."—*Bruce Butler, president, Carpenters Local 184, Salt Lake City*

Clarification: "A Working Families Shopping Guide" (Nov./Dec. 2000) incorrectly lists OshKosh B'Gosh as a union workplace. Also, readers should note that while Harley-Davidson motorcycles are union made, clothes and other items on the Harley-Davidson website may not be. And since publication, the Ohio Art Co. moved production of Etch-a-Sketch to China.

**"YESTERDAY, I TOOK** my 9-year-old niece to see *Rugrats in Paris*. There is a scene in the movie that upset me. It showed a flight attendant who first barked at the children and then walked over a toy in the aisle because, roughly, her union does not allow her to pick it up. I was offended by this cheap shot. Although I am not and have never been a union member, I and everyone in the audience have benefited from all the good things unions have accomplished. I told [my niece] about unions and how they have made the world a better place. I explained to her why...we will not be seeing other Nickelodeon movies or television programs."—*Virginia Anne Mahan, Manchester, N.H.*

**"CONGRATULATIONS** to [AFL-CIO President] John Sweeney for his remarks at the second international symposium of the Global Reporting Initiative. He speaks with passion [and] conviction [on] working peoples' politics. The U.S. labour movement is sending positive and progressive messages...to the rest of the labour movement around the world...."—*Linda Carruthers, national research/industrial officer for the Australian Rail Tram and Bus Industry Union, Newtown, Sydney, Australia*

**"I AM NOT** a union member now, although I did belong to the Musicians Union when I lived in Los Angeles. However, I wanted to let you know that your organization makes me proud to be an American."—*Ralph Davis, Stafford, Va.*

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Author Jody Heymann talks about the need for social policy change and union action as working families struggle to balance job and family demands



Cover: Michael Laughlin/South Florida Sun-Sentinel





JIM LEVITT/IMPACT VISUALS

On record: The more than 1,000 members of the Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild on strike at the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and *The Seattle Times* rally with copies of their alternative newspaper, the *Seattle Union Record*.

## SPEAKING OUT ON SEATTLE NEWSPAPER STRIKE

Laura Vecsey, a member of the Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild, writes a sports column for the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, where members are on strike with union members at the jointly operated *Seattle Times* newspaper. More than 1,000 workers went on strike in November after rejecting a final contract offer that included wage increases of just 55 cents per hour over six years, after a five-month effort by workers to reach a fair agreement.

Vecsey, whose regular sports column has been appearing in the strike paper, the *Seattle Union Record* (printed three times a week and updated daily at [www.unionrecord.com](http://www.unionrecord.com)), sought out her grandmother, now 90. Sixty-one years ago, Mary Spencer Vecsey lost her job as society editor at the now-defunct *Long*

*Island Press* because of her organizing efforts. Their conversation about her experiences with union solidarity culminated in a column for the *Union Record*.

"I couldn't believe it—my grandmother doesn't remember a lot of things, but she was an excellent quote," Vecsey says with a chuckle. According to Mary Spencer Vecsey, "Nobody goes on strike without a very good reason. Usually, it's the arrogance of your boss. Otherwise, everyone would prefer to be working at the job they love, doing your best work."

The conversation encouraged Vecsey to remain strong. "I would never cross a picket line," she says. "But in your mind, you think, 'I want to go back to work, I want to get paid.' So there's this frustration. After talking to my grandmother, that frustration just went away." ☺

## UAW: Family First

In a bold example of family-first bargaining, UAW, along with employers Ford Motor Co. and Visteon, announced plans to open family service and learning centers across the country that will provide such services as child care, after-school programs for teens and retiree volunteer programs.

As part of the Family Service and Learning Center program, the cities with the largest concentration of UAW members and employees at the two companies will host state-of-the-art facilities that will provide 24-hour child care in five cities, and services in 19 other cities.

UAW Local 600 member David Terrell says his family is eager to take advantage of the services the centers will offer. "The whole workforce is made up of family units. [The centers] are going to have their hands full."



Family bargaining: UAW Local 600 members at launch of new initiative.

For more information, click on [www.familycenter online.org](http://www.familycenter online.org).

"This unique effort steps beyond traditional benefits and paycheck issues to provide cutting-edge opportunities for personal growth and development," says UAW President Stephen Yokich.



## Hot Support for New Orleans Workers

Showing support for workers' right to a voice on the job, an overwhelming 75 percent of residents in New Orleans back the concept of labor peace agreements, according to a recent poll by pollster Celinda Lake.

The Hospitality, Hotels and Restaurants Organizing Council (HOTROC) commissioned the survey to gauge local support for its campaign to require labor peace agreements for hotels that get tax breaks and zoning waivers from the city council. The agreements generally require management to hold expedited union elections and

unions to avoid pickets, strikes and boycotts.

While hotel rates in New Orleans are among the highest in the nation, the Bureau of Labor Statistics lists hotel workers in the hot tourist destination as earning among the lowest wages in the industry. For more on HOTROC developments, click on [www.hotroc.org](http://www.hotroc.org).



DAVID RAE MORRIS

Labor peace: New Orleans hospitality workers rally in support of labor peace agreements.



## The States of Working Women

When it comes to earning decent wages, voting in crucial elections and having access to health insurance and higher education, women across the country have vastly different experiences. In its recent report, *The Status of Women in the States*, the public policy organization Institute for Women's Policy Research rates the best and worst states for women—and finds that women are at a particular disadvantage in so-called right to work states, in which laws prevent unions from being fully effective in improving workers' lives.

Women experience the worst conditions—based on such factors as political participation, annual earnings, equal pay and poverty—in “right to work” states, with Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee and Arkansas all ranking at the bottom. In general, workers in states with laws restricting union representation earn 19 percent less than in states without those rules, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

“Women who have union representation have higher wages,” says AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson. “And their union contract provides health care coverage, pensions and sometimes even child care.”

For the IWPR report, go to [www.iwpr.org/states/worst.htm](http://www.iwpr.org/states/worst.htm). @

## INVESTING IN WORKERS

California's working families are ensuring their retirement savings reflect their union values. Spurred on by letters and phone calls from union leaders, board members of the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) in November voted to require portfolio managers for the giant pension fund to consider workers' rights as a condition for new global investments. The \$170 billion fund, serving more than 1 million California workers and retirees, is the second-largest pension fund in the world.

The new policy requires portfolio managers to examine workers' freedom to win a voice at work and their ability to earn a living wage before investing. “CalPERS' new standards will

protect the security of our state employees' pension funds,” says Art Pulaski, executive secretary-treasurer of the California Federation of Labor. “They are responsible stewardship that protects global living standards for all workers.”

By putting their money where their values are, California's workers can help foster respect for workers' rights in developing nations, Pulaski says. That discourages global companies from moving capital and resources across political boundaries, seeking the highest profits, the lowest labor costs and the fewest environmental restrictions. To combat these international profiteers, unions are developing strategies—such as CalPERS' investment standards—to lift all workers. @



MARIANNE KEEFER ZWEIF/PAGE ONE

**Union difference: AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson says unions give women an advantage in states without right to work (for less) laws.**

## Seattle Solidarity Makes the Grade

Buoyed by the entire Seattle union movement, 1,600 graduate student employees at the University of Washington won their struggle for a voice on the job in December, just hours before a planned strike during finals week. The Graduate Student Employee Action Coalition, a UAW affiliate, won recognition and an agreement with management to meet and confer about wages, benefits and working conditions. In addition, the union and administration pledged to work together for passage of state legislation to formalize collective bargaining for the workers, who teach classes, grade exams and read papers.

In support of the student workers, the Washington State Labor Council used its political strength to meet with the governor, influential legislators and top administrators to appeal for fairness. Meanwhile, the King County Labor Council, which includes Seattle, brought area unions together for rallies and a letter-writing campaign to administrators. Building trades members leafleted a construction site on the campus in support of the graduate employees.

“The unions in the area really came through,” says Kimberly Hoover, a graduate student in social work who was active

in the organizing campaign. “It helped us feel that we are part of something much bigger than ourselves, that we are part of a local union movement and a national movement to organize teaching assistants,” she says. “It helped morale.”

The graduate employees already are earning extra credit for solidarity: Because they didn't have to picket the university, they fortified the pickets by the Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild, a Communications Workers of America affiliate, and Teamsters Local 174, who are on strike against *The Seattle Times* and *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* (see story, p. 4).

Graduate employees at New York University recently won a voice at work with UAW in the first such victory at a private university, and student employees also are seeking to form unions with UAW and AFT at universities across the nation. @



**Honors list: Hours before striking, student employees at the University of Washington won a voice on the job with UAW.**



# RIPE FOR A VOICE AT WORK

**A** group of 300 Eurofresh tomato workers in Arizona, who won a voice on the job last summer, ratified a first contract in November, becoming the first agricultural workers in the state to get a bargaining agreement in 30 years.

Tired of unjustified firings and pressure from managers to speed up work, the tomato pickers and caretakers walked off the job a year ago in protest and contacted United Food and Commercial Workers Local 99 for assistance. After voting to form a union in July,

the mostly Latino workers began negotiating a contract, eventually winning a raise, a grievance procedure, dental insurance, a worker-led safety committee and increased vacation and seniority rights.

"Now we have a contract and a little more respect from the company," says Rito Guiterrez, a member of the negotiating team. "With the union, they have to respect people. They were trying to push people to pick faster and firing people for no reason," he says. "The best thing is now we can fight that." ☐

## A Dangerous Direction

**A** North American Free Trade Agreement trade panel's decision that unsafe Mexican trucks should be allowed unlimited access to U.S. highways is a "menace to American motorists," warns Teamsters President James P. Hoffa.

The trade panel, created under the terms of NAFTA to resolve disputes among the United States, Mexico and

Canada, ruled in December that U.S. regulations limiting the trucks to certain trade zones within 20 miles of the border violate the terms of the free trade agreement.

The United States enacted the limits after inspections showed almost half the 11,000 trucks that enter this country each day had such serious safety problems as faulty brakes and tires. In addition, Mexican truck safety regulations, inspections and enforcement lag far behind U.S.

rules. U.S. Department of Transportation data show Mexican trucks licensed to operate in

the current border zones are three times more likely to have safety deficiencies than U.S. rigs.

The U.S. trucking industry supports giving the unsafe trucks unfettered access to U.S. roads because the industry sees an opportunity to increase the use of low-paid Mexican drivers, according to the Teamsters. Currently, the Mexican cargo is off-loaded within the 20-mile zone and reloaded on U.S. trucks, a practice that would change under the new ruling. IBT and consumer groups support the current restrictions on Mexican trucks, which were enacted by the Clinton administration.

"We must not allow a nameless, faceless panel of Big Business bureaucrats to tell American motorists that their safety matters little when it comes to enforcing a trade agreement predicated on corporate profits," Hoffa says.

Under NAFTA, the United States faces trade sanctions if it does not abide by the panel's ruling. ☐



TOM MATTHEWS/TOM MATTHEWS PHOTOGRAPHY

### Union Reserves

Sal Ciano, a Transport Workers Local 100 member and a train operator for the Metropolitan Transit Authority in New York City, operates a diesel train as part of his training with the Army Reserves' 1205 Transportation Railway Operating Battalion—one of two such Army units in the nation. One weekend a month, Ciano joins 25 Local 100 members and former members in the Army Reserves, honing skills they use at the MTA. Most of the reservists had prior military service before joining the 1205, and share the sentiments of Local 100 member Maj. Jaime Ayuso, who says, "It's a way to contribute back for all the great things this country has done for me." ☐





# THIS IS AMERICA. COUNT EVERY VOTE

Working families in Tallahassee, Fla., Washington,

D.C., and in cities across the nation rallied by the thousands at candlelight vigils, marches and demonstrations throughout the weeks after the Nov. 7 election. Unions, civil rights and women's groups and community allies called for a fair and accurate count of the presidential votes, including investigation into the reports that voters, especially African Americans and Haitians, were turned away at the polls and otherwise denied their constitutional right to vote. On Dec. 12, the U.S. Supreme Court slammed the door shut on the Florida vote count, an act AFL-CIO President John Sweeney called "a national tragedy." @



MIKE EVEN



AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka and AFSCME President Gerald McEntee rally at the Supreme Court.

EARL DOTTER



ROBERTO SCHMIDT/AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

Thousands of union members gathered in Tallahassee Dec. 6 to call for state lawmakers to abide by the choice of state voters. The legislature had convened a special session to set in motion a scheme to choose the state's 25 electors to cast Florida's votes in the Electoral College.

Seeing the long campaign for the presidency of the United States come to an end Dec. 13 was painful. Tens of thousands of us worked on the campaign in one way or another with a passion many of us now are turning toward enfranchising and registering voters.

Of course we feel anger and even loss. But we also have much to feel proud about. Never before in our history has there been such a unified and inspired effort. By nearly every measure, the American union movement carried this campaign, led the fight and, against very difficult odds, won the vote in state after state.

The long history of our movement is filled with times like these, and that history tells us that such trying times are preludes to tremendous accomplishments.

In this campaign the American people supported our issues and our agenda. American working families and their unions represent the mainstream values of this nation—values of justice and decency and concern for our fellow citizens. Our priorities are America's priorities. In the coming weeks and months we will continue to fight—and win—on their behalf. And when it gets tough, let's remember that this odyssey has proved we are winners.

Let's also remember what makes us winners.

Throughout the bitter post-election month, we stood up together for the cause of democracy and against the disenfranchisement of tens of thousands of voters—particularly people of color and the elderly. At rallies across the country, we shouted, "This is America. Count Every Vote," while our opponents yelled, "It's Over. Where's My Tax Cut?" and "Learn How to Vote." And we stayed restrained despite taunts and a near riot.

I am proud we shunned low-road tactics and stuck to our values. The big lesson for us in this election isn't that we should fight our adversaries on their turf even if that turf is repugnant. The lesson is that we must grow. We need more union households participating in our programs, getting out information and making the difference for pro-working family candidates. Organizing is Job No. 1 for today's union movement (see story, page 8).

Through organizing, we not only improve workers' lives today, but ensure workers have a fully enfranchised role in shaping their futures and their children's through political and legislative action. If our movement grows in size, it grows in its ability to advance working families' interests. If our movement stagnates, we step aside and let America's democratic values be eroded.

Organizing is hard work. It will require an investment from our unions and our members just as big—and with the same kind of passion and commitment—as what we pour into electoral politics. The election outcome serves as a reminder that to continue being winners, we must grow. @

## We Must Grow



MIKE EVEN

BY JOHN J. SWEENEY



# Bigger, Faster, BETTER Organizing

## Union Movement Moves a Four-Point Plan for Signing up 1 Million New Members a Year

By Laureen Lazarovici

**W**ithin two years of shifting into high gear and helping organize workers who make car parts, the UAW has helped more than 23,000 auto parts workers win a voice on the job. By persevering in the face of an anti-union state law, AFT has vastly increased the number of teachers who have a say in improving education in Texas schools. Receiving an outstretched hand from religious leaders in Little Rock, Ark., Office and Professional Employees won a landmark organizing victory for nurses in that southern state. And by bargaining strategically with an eye on technological advances, Communications Workers of America is helping workers who ensure your voice is heard over the cell phone have their own voice at work.

These are some examples of unions ramping up the scale and pace of efforts to help workers organize so they have a voice on the job, in their communities, throughout the halls of Congress and across the global economy. In 1999, the share of the American workforce represented by unions stayed steady for the first year in nearly two decades—an important indicator that the efforts of thousands of workers, activists and organizers are showing results and improving the lives of working people. But the union movement has a long way to go: To keep membership stable, unions must organize 500,000 members a year; to increase

membership, unions must organize a minimum of 1 million members each year.

Mindful that far more must be done to assure long-term viability, union leaders are challenging the union movement to dramatically expand organizing efforts. In August, the AFL-CIO Executive Council called on all unions to redouble their focus on organizing, to “increase the number of union members nationwide and increase union membership as a percentage of the workforce.” A larger proportion of union members in an industry also reduces corporations’ ability to undercut union members’ gains and pit groups of workers against each other.

“We must build our movement,” the August Executive Council resolution exhorts. To make this happen, the Executive Council pledges to accelerate the pace and the scale of organizing so that 1 million new members a year will join unions. That’s a rate of about six new members per month for every 1,000 current members—approximately 80,000 new members a month. At that rate, union members would be building their strength in industries ranging from bread-baking to sheet-metal welding, enabling them to lift the standards for all workers in their fields.

The AFL-CIO seeks to help unions get the tools they need to organize better, bigger and faster through a four-point process, approved by the Executive Council, that involves:

1. Setting the goal of achieving a million-members-a-year organizing pace;
  2. Encouraging national affiliates to set and achieve higher numeric organizing goals to arrive at the million-member pace. Convening regional meetings to enable local union leaders to plan and collaborate on initiatives that will increase the organizing pace in their areas;
  3. Regularly assessing how the federation’s resources can best be used in achieving these increased goals. The Organizing Department will bring together various affiliates to provide training and information-sharing on internal organizing, first contract campaigns and other key tactical issues.
  4. Tracking and sharing information about organizing campaigns through a proprietary database for organizers.
- Many unions already are using a combination of winning strategies, including mobilizing existing members to spread the message of union solidarity, focusing an ever-growing percentage of their resources and staffing on organizing and developing strategic organizing plans. As a result, they are building bigger, better unions and doing it faster than ever before. And with the support of the entire movement, unions all over the country—such as in the following examples—can do the same.

# to Build Strength for



### Organizing strong

When Eagle Picher, a supplier of auto parts to the Big Three automakers, took over an independent auto parts plant in Hillsdale, Mich., in the early 1970s, the company gradually began chipping away at benefits, including cost-of-living adjustments and profit sharing. Over the years, workers tried to form a union, only to be beaten back by their employer's anti-union tactics, such as firings and captive-audience meetings.

"Without a contract, you have no voice," says Danny May, a 29-year machine operator at the plant. But this past August, May and the more than 650 workers at Eagle Picher won their goal of forming a union with the UAW. Workers and union leaders credit two important factors for the victory: The active involvement of longtime UAW members who work at the Big Three auto assembly plants and the union's renewed strategic focus on organizing workers within its "core industry," the automotive sector.

"We have a plan to help workers in our core industry organize, and the independent parts sector is an important part of it," says Bob King, UAW's vice president for organizing.

"Nonunion suppliers are in direct competition with union parts shops, and that makes it harder for our members to get strong contracts," he says, emphasizing the need to build up the share of unionized workers for the sake of all workers. "We can't win justice for our members when they are competing with nonunion shops." Since June 1998, when the UAW created King's post, the union has won 23,000 new members in the independent parts sector, 67 percent of the 35,000 new members who signed on with the UAW in the same period.

Workers also credit the support they got from UAW members at the Big Three auto assembly corporations. Just days before the vote at Eagle Picher, hundreds of workers from Ford,

DaimlerChrysler and General Motors plants traveled to a Hillsdale rally from as far away as Syracuse, N.Y. King says that building the bridge between auto parts workers and auto assembly workers is crucial. "They are eager to get involved because they know they can help prevent the downward pressure on wages and working conditions" that nonunion companies exert.

Tom Zmrazek, vice president of UAW Local 1250 in Brook Park, Ohio, was one of the workers who traveled to Hillsdale for that pivotal rally. "We told the workers there that they weren't alone, that their struggle was the struggle of all working people."

### Acting creatively

Like the UAW, AFT also has boosted its organizing efforts by focusing on the workers who form the heart of the union: teachers and other education professionals. In Texas, AFT has increased its membership seven-fold in 20 years—even though teachers are prohibited by law from bargaining collectively in the Lone Star State.

"Everybody talks about organizing—everyone also talks about winning the lottery," says John Cole, president of the Texas Federation of Teachers. "The difference between a goal and dream," he says, "is a plan." Every five years, the state body has

Workers and union leaders credit two important factors for the organizing victory at Eagle Picher: The active involvement of longtime UAW members who work at the Big Three auto assembly plants and the union's renewed strategic focus on organizing workers within its "core industry," the automotive sector.

**Organizing strong:** Hundreds of UAW members traveled from as far as New York to support the organizing efforts of workers at an Eagle Picher auto parts plant in Michigan.



# Working Families



Bargaining to organize is about the union being an effective voice to accomplish change. It makes sense to engage the employer to say that every employee in that company needs to have the fundamental right to choose a voice at work."

—Larry Cohen

*CWA executive vice president*



**Organizing smart:** CWA President Morton Bahr joins union members whose two-week strike at Verizon resulted in a contract that includes card-check recognition for the company's wireless divisions.

drawn up and refined strategic plans, which include building political strength and translating it into concrete improvements for members. "We helped elect people to school boards who believe democracy is as important in running a school district as it is in other parts of life," says Cole. The union supports candidates who back the right of teachers to vote for a group to serve as the "exclusive consultant" on their behalf. As a result, five school districts—Corpus Christi, San Antonio, South San Antonio, Dallas and Austin—have passed laws enabling teachers to vote, and all have chosen to affiliate with AFT.

In Dallas, 9,500 teachers elected AFT to represent them in 1997 and 9,000 support staff members followed suit two years later. The organizing drive was aided by AFT's commitment to recruiting unionized teachers from across the United States to come to Texas and lend a hand, says Harley Hiscox, president of the Alliance of Dallas Educators. After the union consulted with the school board, starting teachers won an impressive 33 percent salary increase. The union also won the right to set up a non-profit group, the Alliance/AFT Education Center Inc., to conduct teacher training. The strength of thousands of educators working together made these improvements possible. "Without the power of our members, we are not a player in legislation, politics, policy and the court of public

opinion," says Cole. "That's why organizing has to be the focus."

### Changing the rules

AFT faced an obstacle—the law against collective bargaining for teachers—yet found a creative way to accomplish the union's goals. Many unions also fight to change the rules that can make organizing harder. CWA has been doing that with its "bargaining to organize" strategy, which succeeded spectacularly with the recent strike and subsequent agreement at Verizon.

Over the summer, thousands of red-shirted Verizon workers, members of CWA and the IBEW, rallied at picket lines from Maine to Virginia. One of their key demands: leveling the playing field so the union can better reach out to workers as the company expands into new technologies. Maintaining their solidarity for more than two weeks, the workers won an agreement that ensures workers at Verizon (formed by the merger of Bell Atlantic, GTE and Air-Touch Cellular in mid-2000) could join CWA through card-check. In a card-check



TEXAS FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

Every five years, the Texas AFT has drawn up and refined strategic plans, which include building political strength and translating it into concrete improvements for members.

**Organizing creatively:** In Texas, AFT has increased its membership seven-fold in 20 years—even though teachers are prohibited by law from bargaining collectively in the Lone Star State.



recognition, a company recognizes the union after a majority of workers have signed cards saying they want the union. The company also agreed to stay neutral during organizing campaigns.

"Bargaining is about the union being an effective voice that can accomplish change," says Larry Cohen, CWA executive vice president. "So it makes sense to engage the employer to say that every employee in that company needs to have the fundamental right" to choose a voice at work, he says.

Similarly, 1199 New York/National Health & Human Services Employees Union, an SEIU affiliate, developed a strategy that would help it bring a voice on the job to the thousands of health care workers squeezed by increasing corporatization. With large-scale changes in the health care industry happening quickly, the union knew it had to match the pace. In September 1999, union leaders mounted simultaneous organizing drives at three large hospitals in Yonkers.

"We were in a bolder, faster, more aggressive mode," says Minerva Solla, the union's vice president. Activists took on organizing campaigns at Yonkers General, St. John Riverside and St. Joseph hospital and nursing home—and won at all three.

"There was a sense among the workers that, 'If they did it, we can do it, too,'" she says. "If we hadn't done it all at the same time, I don't know if we would have won."

### Forming community coalitions

At St. Vincent's Hospital in Little Rock, Ark., which Catholic Health Initiatives purchased in 1997, the new management laid off so many support staff workers that already-overworked nurses were cleaning toilets and taking out the trash. "Sometimes we have to



go hunting for stretchers and wheelchairs," says veteran nurse Marianne Flammage. When she received a letter from the union asking her to get involved with an organizing drive at the hospital, Flammage mailed the reply card the next day. The 900 nurses' first attempt to unionize with OPEIU failed in November 1999 by a narrow margin in the face of an aggressive employer campaign. The National Labor Relations Board ordered a second election. But the nurses realized early on they needed to reach out to the surrounding community to help them win a voice on the job. So they sought the support of the Arkansas Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, led by a Methodist minister, Steve Copley.

Religious leaders signed a petition calling for a fair election and tried to meet with the hospital's CEO. They held a prayer vigil outside the hospital and ran a full-page newspaper ad supporting the workers on the day of the vote.

Copley says unions and religious congregations are "natural allies." The partnership helps win organizing campaigns because of the "strong moral sense" the religious leaders bring to the effort, he says. In June, a

**Organizing together: Workers partnered with members of the religious community to win a voice at work with OPEIU at St. Vincent's Hospital in Arkansas.**

**Nurses realized they needed to reach out to the surrounding community to help them win a voice on the job.**

majority of the nurses voted to join OPEIU, becoming the first nurses at a private hospital in Arkansas to win a voice on the job. In September, they began bargaining for their first contract.

Poultry workers in Kentucky also won a voice at work with the help of community allies. After an 18-month struggle, the majority of 1,500 workers at Cagle-Keystone in Albany voted in December to join United Food and Commercial Workers Local 227. The campaign drew the support of elected state officials, who criticized the company for taking millions in federal and state tax dollars while preventing workers from exercising their legal right to join a union. Community, labor and religious leaders, including Kentucky Jobs with Justice, stood with workers amid the company's firings, harassment and threats. The victory was the latest organizing win in the UFCW's strategic Poultry Justice Organizing Campaign, which is aimed at improving wages, benefits and working conditions for poultry workers across the country and is part of the union's stepped-up efforts in the South. ☐

## Organizing a Million

### Make the Commitment

- "Audit" your union to examine the need for more organizing and the resources available.
- Spend time on organizing and talking about organizing in every forum.
- Take the case to union members.

### Devote More Resources

- Make the funding discussion part of the overall conversation about the need to organize.

- Involve members in the funding decisions.

### Develop a Strong Organizing Staff

- Hire an organizing director.
- Recruit core organizers from inside and outside your union.
- Provide organizers training through the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute or George Meany Center for Labor Studies.

### Motivate Organizers

- Give organizers the resources they need.

- Give organizers the status they deserve.

- Create an organizing culture by showing that organizing is your union's priority, such as talking about organizing at every meeting.

### Mobilize Members

- Form a volunteer organizing team.

*For tips on organizing, call for a copy of Organizing for Change, Changing to Organize: A Report from the AFL-CIO Elected Leader Task Force on Organizing, 1996. First 10 copies are free; \$1 per copy for 11 or more. Call 1-800-442-5645. ☐*

Related organizing charts on page 22.



# FOR THE HEALTH OF OUR CHILDREN

By JANE BIRNBAUM

When Gabriele Vasquez, a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 881, began cashiering at a Chicago-area Osco drugstore last June, she recently had separated from her husband and was supporting Michael, 7, and Ramon, 4. The three wouldn't have health insurance until Vasquez's job-based coverage started in the fall.

Fortunately, Vasquez spotted fliers for KidCare—Illinois' version of a federal block grant program called the State Children's Health Insurance Program—on Local 881's bulletin board. Spotting a chance to fill that gap, Vasquez grabbed a flier and questioned her business agent, Cathy Howe, when they first met. Howe immediately hooked her up with Elizabeth Belan, Local 881 public relations coordinator and KidCare point-person.

Because Vasquez's starting wage was so low, the boys qualified for cost-free Medicaid. Today,

*(Continued on page 14)*

All covered: UFCW Local 881 member Gabriele Vasquez says her sons, Michael and Ramon, never would have received health care coverage if it hadn't been for her union.

"I'D NEVER HAV

STEVE KAGAN



# CREATING SOLUTIONS TO CHILD HEALTH CARE IN SAN JOSE

If a low-wage job in the changing new economy makes it tough for workers to insure their children, much less themselves, it is even harder if they live where the cost of living is one of the nation's highest, as it is in California's Silicon Valley. There, the Labor Council of South Bay AFL-CIO, headed by Amy Dean, and community activists are leading the charge to provide coverage for each of Santa Clara County's 69,000 uninsured children.

Their efforts began when Working Partnerships, a nonprofit research group closely affiliated with the labor council, found that two-thirds of the city of San Jose's uninsured kids already qualify for state programs, while one-third would require private coverage. That led researchers to propose a plan that would spread the word about public programs, but do even more. They also proposed to help parents pay premiums. "In over 30 years in community organizing and politics in this area, I've never seen an issue receive the overwhelming public support that this one has," says Working Partnerships Director Bob Brownstein.

With People Acting in Community Together, a faith-based grassroots group, Working Partnerships originally proposed a Children's Health Initiative that would cover uninsured children younger than 19 in San Jose. It would use, in part, \$2 million annually of the approximately \$10 million a year the city will receive as its share of the recent tobacco industry class-action lawsuit settlement. Hundreds of union members and community activists rallied in support of the proposal prior to the city council meeting in June, when council members voted on the plan, and lined up to speak in chambers.

"We had service and public workers, teachers and guys in hard hats fighting this fight because it's right," says labor council staff director Marion Steeg.



MICHELLE LONGOSZ

**Kids first: Union members are spearheading efforts to ensure all children in Santa Clara County, Calif., have health coverage.**

Opposed by San Jose Mayor Ron Gonzales and not supported by the business community, the plan lost by just one vote. But the coalition's efforts won attention from the local and national press, leading Santa Clara County (where San Jose is located) to pledge \$3 million annually of its tobacco settlement money for a Children's Health Care Program that would cover all uninsured children younger than 19 in the county, including those in San Jose.

Then, in a welcome concession to public sentiment, San Jose officials created a new committee to consider all requests for tobacco money, including the one from initiative supporters. Whatever San Jose decides, activists hope to roll out the plan early this year. "We're participating for the community," says Loyd Williams, business manager for Plumbers and Pipe Fitters Local 393 in San Jose. "Some people think labor does only for itself, but our members know we're fortunate to have good wages and benefits and we think we should help other people get the same." @

ARD OF KIDCARE IF NOT FOR THE UNION," SAYS VASQUEZ.



## “UNION MEMBERS ALSO GIVE BACK, BUILDING STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH TI

*Continued from page 12*

Vasquez makes more supervising her store's cosmetics department and Osco provides health insurance for the family. But because her co-payment takes more than \$25 weekly from her pay, she's exploring whether her family qualifies for a premium rebate that Illinois offers through KidCare. "I'd never have heard of KidCare if not for the union," Vasquez says.

Federal legislators established CHIP in 1997 primarily to give states money to provide health coverage for the children of the working poor who make too much to qual-

ify for the state-administered federal poverty health insurance program, Medicaid, yet not enough to afford private health insurance. Still, three years after CHIP was created, the nation is still a long way from getting all kids covered by the appropriate publicly financed health care plan.

Of the nearly 11 million children today who do not have health coverage, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, an estimated 4 million are eligible for Medicaid, and another 2.5 million for CHIP, says Kristine Hartvigsen, spokeswoman for Covering Kids, a national health access initiative for low-income uninsured children financed by

### TIPS FOR GETTING THE WORD OUT ON CHIP

Because of new time limits on how long people can collect welfare cash payments, many people mistakenly think there's a similar limit on the number of years their children may be in CHIP or Medicaid, says Donna Cohen Ross, director of outreach for the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a research group studying low-income worker issues. "Some parents may not sign up their kid, figuring they'd better not enroll until the child becomes seriously ill," Ross says. In fact, children are eligible until they're 19, with no other time limit on participation, she explains.

While undocumented children are not eligible for CHIP, children who are either U.S. citizens, legal immigrants or qualified noncitizens—regardless of their parents' immigrant status—can join. According to Elizabeth Belan, Local 881 public relations coordinator and KidCare point-person, many undocumented workers mistakenly fear that enrolling their children could threaten their own efforts to become citizens. It will not, she says.

Union activists recommend the following tips for getting the word out about CHIP:

- Use tact. For example, UFCW Local 881 Business Agent Cathy Howe says to members, "There's an excellent child health insurance program in Illinois called KidCare. If you're ever in contact with someone you think might be able to use it, have them call me."
- Keep the conversation confidential. "You don't want to bring up anything personal on the shop floor or in the break room," Howe says. "I just tell members I have 24-hour voice mail."
- Maintain the drumbeat. Belan runs small notices about KidCare in most issues of her local union's bimonthly publication. "We do have turnover or someone might miss a particular issue," she explains. Workplace fliers about CHIP are key—Local 881 keeps a flier on every union bulletin board in every work location—and ensures each flier includes phone numbers for Belan and the state agency. Remember language needs: Unite for Dignity in Florida distributes CHIP fliers in Creole, English and Spanish, says Monica Russo, director of the organizing campaign.
- Show support from the top. "I feel very strongly that we got involved because of the commitment of our [local] president, Ron Powell," Belan says. "He decided that being the 'go-to' person for CHIP would be part of my everyday responsibilities." ■



**Strong communities:** UFCW President Doug Dority, shown here at a demonstration supporting Wal-Mart workers' efforts to join a union, says healthy kids mean stronger, more vital communities.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

"Primarily, it is a lack of outreach to make families aware of their children's possible eligibility that accounts for underenrollment," she says. "Too many people mistakenly think that if they're earning money, they're not eligible—that's where outreach comes in."

In many different ways, union activists are helping to spread the word about health coverage for children. They're lobbying state officials to simplify often lengthy and intrusive applications and to expand CHIP programs: In Florida, for instance, Unite for Dignity, an organizing campaign of SEIU Local 1115, Florida division of SEIU 1199, has allied with religious groups and medical service providers to persuade state leaders to allow more children of immigrant workers to get CHIP coverage.



TIVISM.” —UFCW PRESIDENT DOUG DORITY.

Some local unions promote CHIP to assist members through tough life transitions, such as re-entering the workforce after divorce, with organizers giving the information to help stabilize potential new members. The UFCW—which has a tradition of getting benefits for part-time members, according to UFCW Negotiated Benefits Director David Blitzstein—and other unions are looking ahead for more opportunities to expand participation in CHIP. “For the past 50 years, union wages and benefits have raised community living standards and been the ticket for millions of working men and women into America’s middle class,” says UFCW President Doug DORITY. “Union members also give back, building strong communities through their activism, like Local 881 members helping make sure kids have health insurance. Healthy kids mean stronger, more vital communities.” Some unions are considering a pilot program that would use CHIP dollars to coordinate coverage through a Taft-Hartley plan (which receives contributions from more than one employer and is jointly sponsored and run by unions and management). Under Taft-Hartley plans, it’s possible that CHIP dollars could cover the children of seasonal workers and those with multiple employers.

“The rules have changed,” says Michelle Sforza, an AFSCME policy analyst. “There is no longer an informal pact that employers care for employees. Labor’s efforts to expand universal health coverage do not indicate any failure on its part.”

For unions focusing on representing low-paid workers, CHIP can be a valuable organizing tool. Newark, N.J.-based organizers for a new AFSCME district—Home Health Care 1199/AFSCME, National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees—are spreading the word about CHIP as they contact workers statewide. Now called Family-Care, New Jersey’s program recently expanded to include working-poor parents. “We’re meeting 27,000 folks, and we’re a nonthreatening source of information,” explains Patrick Nowlan, an organizer and director for the new district, which won its first two elections—a total of 381 members—in November.

The union’s strategy is to enroll potential new members in existing state programs so their family’s medical needs are covered, even before contract bargaining. And 1199/AFSCME organizers always let workers know there is no stigma in participating in a public health care program: “Part of our presentation is telling them the public health agency that provides financing for their boss’s and their salary should also provide their benefits, just as the state does for its workers,” Nowlan says.

When Nowlan and fellow organizers inform home health care workers about FamilyCare, the workers frequently are surprised that their employers—who have been urging them to pony up premiums for their pricy group plans—haven’t told them about it. “Chances are, the employer knew about the CHIP program all along,” he says. “It’s a travesty when you meet with a worker who is making \$7 an hour, trying to make ends meet, and they can’t afford family coverage through their employer but enroll anyway, thinking it’s their only option.”

Sielta Ramjas, an activist helping to organize her co-workers to join 1199/AFSCME and a home health care worker for 11 years who “loves the work,” enrolled her son in Medicaid when he was a baby. Today, he’s nearly 8 and in Family-Care. “Originally, I didn’t want him in a public program,” Ramjas recalls, “but I had no other choice.” Ryan has received good medical attention through the years, says Ramjas, whose employer does not provide any dependent medical coverage.

Healthy choice: Home health care worker Sielta Ramjas’s son, Ryan, is covered under CHIP.



CLARK JONES/IMPACT VISUALS

For herself, Ramjas currently has insurance through her job. But she’s not happy with the paltry benefits it provides for an \$18 monthly premium, and looks forward to getting 1199/AFSCME-negotiated coverage for her and Ryan when she and co-workers become members. “Getting people from Point A to Point B,” says Nowlan, “is what unions are about.” ■

Many unions and central labor councils are considering ways to help parents afford child health care. The bottom line is achieving health care for every child in America. To share your story or ideas, e-mail: [atwork@affcio.org](mailto:atwork@affcio.org); or write: Editor, *America@work*, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006.





**In the high-tech field, more and more employees are foreign workers whose temporary status often results in bonded servitude**

**By James B. Parks**

# The Worst of



Inder Singh came to the United States 10 years ago on an H-1B visa to work as a computer programmer for a company in the Midwest. He realized almost immediately that his \$42,000 salary was a lot less than he would have earned had he been an American. Then he heard stories of other foreign temporary programmers who were making only \$28,000 for the same work with few or no benefits.

Kim Singh (no relation to Inder Singh) told a June 2000 AFL-CIO immigration worker forum that the software company he worked for "treated the foreign workers like indentured servants."

"They took 25 percent of my salary from every paycheck. When I questioned this practice, I was told that I would get the money after I left the company. They also deducted percentages from the other foreign workers. After each of us left, none of us received the money that had been withheld."

Both men are former H-1B workers, a visa status created by Big Business and its allies in Congress who claim there is a shortage of qualified American workers to fill jobs requiring a bachelor's degree or similar experience in such occupations as computer programming. While some greedy companies move jobs overseas to exploit cheap labor rather than create good jobs in this country, the computer industry uses another tool—the H-1B visa program—to depress wages by importing foreign workers and exploiting them. At hundreds of high-tech companies, workers on H-1B visas are not just making less than their American counterparts, they're often forced into what may amount to six years of indentured servitude, says Dr. Norman Matloff, professor of computer science at the University of California, Davis.

The federal H-1B program allows employers to hire skilled foreign guest workers—a total of about 500,000 have been hired since 1990—for temporary jobs in the United States. Most end up as low-end, high-tech workers. In October, Congress passed and President Clinton signed the so-called American Competitiveness in the Twenty-first Century Act of 2000, which increases the statutory limits on H-1B visas from 115,000 to 195,000 for each of the next three years. It adds exemptions for higher education institutions that could raise the total to 250,000 per year.

At the San Jose, Calif., company where Kim Singh worked, all the workers were employed under temporary work visas. "Four to five programmers lived in a one-bedroom apartment," he says. "For my apartment, I had four other roommates and the company paid \$1,450 a month. Then it deducted \$1,450 from each of our paychecks."

But none of the workers could protest. They were trapped by their employers, who were sponsoring them for "green cards," the official visa that would allow them to become permanent U.S. residents. Many were afraid if they challenged their employers, they would be sent back to their home countries.

To halt such abuses and discrimination and to restore a level playing field, H-1B workers need a strong voice in their workplace, says Marcus Courtney, an organizer with Seattle-based WashTech, an affiliate of The Newspaper Guild/Communications Workers of America.

"We need to do a better job of identifying the changes that are taking place—how many H-1B workers there are, where they work and what skills they have," Courtney says. "The question is, how are they treated and what are the rules. They need a voice and true rights on the job."

"If we can push for global labor standards in underdeveloped countries, we can push for them for foreign workers in this country," Courtney says.

**"They are foreign workers and temp workers. They have the worst of two worlds."**

—Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, Washington, D.C.

The AFL-CIO, which opposed the increase in the H-1B limits, has called for a balanced approach to meeting information technology needs. The AFL-CIO Executive Council in 1998 recommended expanding training to improve the skills of U.S. workers, recruiting more women and people of color into high-tech jobs, reducing contingent employment and improving pay and working conditions. The industry has an abysmal record of hiring minority workers. Latino workers make up only 3.5 percent of the high-tech employees and African Americans 7 percent.

### **'Body shops' and depressed wages**

It is clear that the H-1B program depresses wages. Several university studies have shown that H-1B workers tend to earn 20 percent less than their U.S. citizen counterparts, says UC-Davis' Matloff. In an October 2000 report, the National Academies of Science's National Research Council concluded that "the current size of the H-1B workforce relative to the number of information technology professionals is large enough to keep wages from rising as fast as might be expected in a tight labor market."

The staffing director of Texas Instruments Inc., Roger Coker, admitted as much in an August 1999 interview with *U.S. News &*

# Two Worlds



**"If we can push for global labor standards in underdeveloped countries, we can push for them for foreign workers in this country."**

—Marcus Courtney,  
WashTech/CWA organizer



*World Report*, in which he noted the company is using every trick in the book to fight labor costs—including pressuring Congress to allow more foreign engineers and computer specialists to take U.S. jobs through H-1B visas.

Employers get away with underpaying and overworking H-1B workers because workers fear losing their chance to get a green card. It takes about five years to process green card applications, and since the H-1B visa is for six years, the worker is afraid to leave the company, says Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies in Washington, D.C. If the worker leaves and goes to another company, the new employer has to re-apply for the green card, but all the while the six-year clock is ticking. "Some are making decent money," Krikorian says, "but they can't go across the street. They are stuck. If the employers really wanted more workers, they would just put in for more green cards. They want folks who can't leave."

Many of the H-1B workers are recruited by visa vending companies created to bring in temporary foreign workers. These "body shops," as Krikorian calls them, supply temporary workers to some of the nation's largest companies. The workers have few benefits and are not allowed to have a voice at work. "They are foreign workers and temp workers. So they have the worst of two worlds," Krikorian says.

The H-1B program has mushroomed, Inder Singh says, because there is so much

money to be made, especially by the body shops. According to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, four of the top 10 users of the H-1B program are job shops—visa vending companies that bring in temporary foreign workers and serve as temp agencies for them. One of the largest job shops, Mastech Systems Corp., based in Oakdale, Pa., reported revenues of \$400 million last year. More than one-third of its workforce comes from the H-1B program. Other top 10 users include computer giants Motorola Inc., Oracle Corp., Cisco Systems Inc., Intel Corp. and Microsoft Corp.

### **No shortage of skilled U.S. workers**

It is a dangerous myth, says Matloff, that the H-1B program is needed because—as employers claim—there are not enough skilled programmers in the United States. No independent studies have shown a high-tech labor shortage, and the computer industry routinely does not act like an industry in crisis. If there were a shortage, experienced, skilled workers would command higher wages, he says. But wages for programmers rose only 8.2 percent from 1997 to 1999, just 2 percent above inflation. At the same time it is crying labor shortage, computer industry employers have laid off more than 100,000 programmers since October 1998, the last time Congress raised the H-1B limits, according to the Labor Department.

"There is no shortage of programmers," Matloff says. "The problem is that employers are not willing to hire them. High-tech companies hire only about 2 percent of applicants for programming jobs, claiming they are not qualified because they do not have work experience in some new software skill. This claim is unwarranted, because any competent programmer can become productive in a new language within weeks."

The rules governing H-1B workers need to be reformed and changed, Kim Singh says, because these workers lack the power to stand up for themselves. They need a voice that will be strong enough to prevent them from being abused and misused, he says. "The high-tech world is depicted as prosperous and progressive," he says. "But what I have seen is rampant discrimination and exploitation. The employers use the laws to their convenience and foreign temporary workers are denied their rights." ☐

### **Percent of Software Applicants Hired by Selected Employers**

American Management Systems	2 percent
Broderbund Software	1 percent
Cohesive	2 percent
Datascan	5 percent
Deltanet	4 percent
EChbridges Inc.	2 percent
Flashpoint Technology	2 to 5 percent
H.L. Yoh Co.	4 percent
Inktomi Corp.	<5 percent
Microsoft Corp.	2 percent
Net Perceptions Inc.	2 percent
New England firm	1 percent
Qualcomm Inc.	4.5 percent
Radiant Systems Inc.	<1 percent
Red Hat Inc.	<1 percent

Source: Center for Immigration Studies



# Flexible and Family Friendly

Author Jody Heymann discusses the need for job flexibility



RICHARD CHASE

**Q** Your book provided the data backing up what working men and women have been telling us over the past few years: Workers need job flexibility to attend to family members' important needs, such as illness, and they need affordable child care and elder care. So, where do we go next?

**A** We know from our studies when children are left home alone sick or are sent to school sick: It's when parents don't have paid leave. I think we can see that even in this tight labor market and as low as unemployment is, the fact that this problem is not being solved in the market makes it all the more clear that we must address it as a democracy, as a country.

As a nation, America stands nearly alone in the extent to which it has relied on the private sector to voluntarily provide leave. Some companies have stepped up to the plate and provide excellent family benefits, and there are great examples of what unions have negotiated and achieved. But today, the evidence makes clear that many employers are not voluntarily providing workers the paid leave they need to care for family members. What's striking about the data is that while all families are in jeopardy, there is a huge gap in paid leave for middle- and low-income workers, all of which speaks to the need for universal coverage for paid leave. The solution can include public-private partnerships, but ultimately the solution is legislative, probably starting at the state level, then moving to the federal. If you look at not just Europe, but around the world, 141 countries have paid maternity leave, for example. We do not. In addition, countries with paid paternity

*Jody Heymann, M.D., author of The Widening Gap: Why America's Working Families Are in Jeopardy and What Can Be Done About It (Basic Books, 2000), talks about the need for social policy change and union action as working families struggle for job flexibility. This article is part of the AFL-CIO's effort to engage a range of voices on the problems facing working families.*

leave include Canada, Denmark, France and Germany, to name a few.

**Q** Any ideas on the type of legislation that would be most effective for paid leave?

**A** Two mechanisms states now are considering for financing paid family leave are disability and unemployment insurance. The important thing is that the leave is paid from an insurance pool that is not experience rated so that, for instance, employers don't hesitate to hire more young women who may become pregnant because they fear bearing a disproportionate cost of such leave. Paid leave insurance should be available to meet family needs beyond birth and adoption and should cover all employees, including temporary and part-time workers. We have this type of widespread coverage now for Social Security, for example, which came about when most families depended on a single wage earner. Now we must ensure against the wage loss dual

as well as single earners face to meet critical family needs.

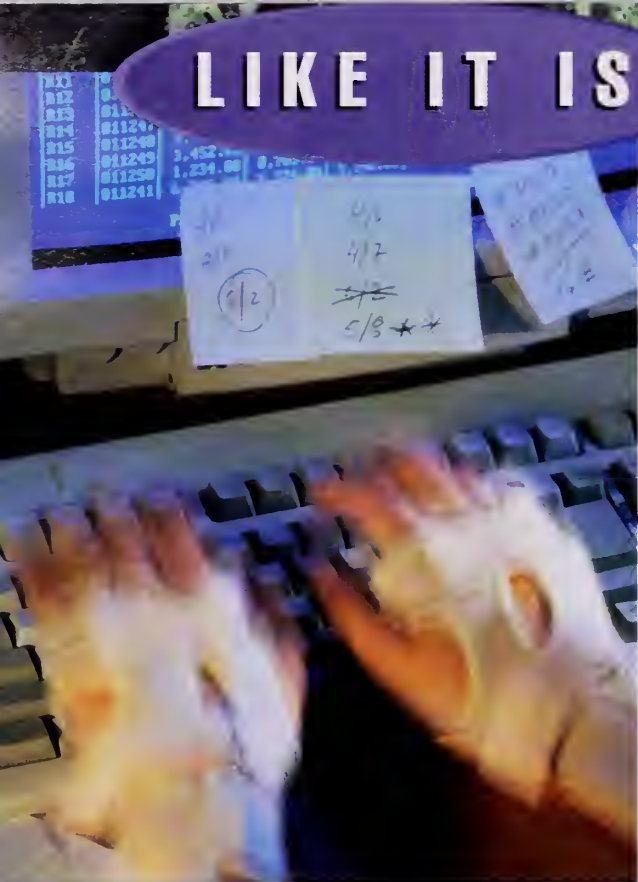
**Q** What do you see as the role of the union movement in ensuring family-friendly policies for working families?

**A** In all of this, there are key roles for the union movement, both in helping create innovation in workplaces and in working for improved public policies. To date, a range of organizations, including unions, faith-based groups and nonprofits, have worked for change in public policies. Continuing that work is important. In addition, unions need to continue reaching agreements with employers such as the one between the United Auto Workers and the Big Three automakers. An example of such a program is the new Ford-Visteon family-care centers (see page 4). Innovative practices in individual workplaces show how change can be achieved, and that companies can succeed economically while workers are doing better. Showing that change is possible, whether on a single workplace level or in a neighborhood or state, always moves us forward. @

—Interview by Jane Birnbaum



LIKE IT IS



ZIGY KALUZYNY/STONE

## Unions Gear Up to Protect Landmark Ergonomics Rule

Working families celebrated passage in November of the nation's first federal ergonomics rule: The Occupational Safety and Health Administration issued the path-breaking standard as the result of a decade long campaign by union activists. The new rule will require employers to reduce ergonomics hazards in the workplace that injure and cripple more than 600,000 workers each year. Workers in virtually all sectors of the economy are at risk—from food-processing employees injured by the speed of work, to computer operators and cashiers injured by repetitive tasks and poor work station design, to nurses who suffer back injuries from lifting.

While victory in winning the ergonomics rule is a monumental achievement, there hardly has been time to cheer—ergonomics activists already are battling to make sure that Big Business does not find a way to undo the new rule in the coming months. It's likely business groups will ask their friends in the Bush administration to take immediate action to stay the rule.

By late November, AFSCME had alerted activists they would need to fight to preserve the ergonomics rule. "There is no question that bringing down the rule is a key priority for the business community," says Charles Loveless, AFSCME director of legislation. "Stopping business will require labor's concentrated effort. We may not match its money, but we will prevail with people power."

"OSHA did years of research, in an open process, and if Congress does not make a similar effort to find the facts, they should keep their hands off the standard," says Frank Mirer, UAW Health and Safety Department director. "The same goes for the Bush administration."

Big Business is attacking the ergonomics rule—scheduled to take effect in workplaces late this year—in Congress and the courts. Suits filed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers and other business groups have been consolidated in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. In a release announcing his group's suit, NAM Senior Vice President Mike Baroody charged that the "breathhtaking speed with which OSHA has promulgated the ergo rule makes it clear: Rightly understood, this is not a health and safety rule, it's a political payoff."

With a decade hardly seeming like "breathhtaking speed," the AFL-CIO and affiliate unions think the rule goes a long way toward addressing musculoskeletal injuries, but not far enough. The AFL-CIO and several affiliate unions are challenging the rule in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. The union movement asks that OSHA strengthen the new rule—as now written, it does not cover all workers, nor provide remedies until an injury has occurred.

On the congressional front, Big Business is asking legislators to prohibit OSHA from spending money on implementing the new rule, or even to reverse it under the Congressional Review Act. In response, union leaders are contacting their members of Congress to urge them not to reverse the rule.

Activists plan to carry that message directly to members of Congress. The UAW

began spreading the word in December by highlighting the issue at a skilled trades conference in Las Vegas. In early February, 1,000 UAW activists will be on Capitol Hill lobbying for the rule when they convene their annual political action conference in Washington, D.C.

Unions are contacting their members about the need to write their elected officials. "Local union people, the rank and file, have no idea how influential their contacts with Congress are," says Mirer. The most persuasive letters, he suggests, are from members who've suffered on-the-job ergonomic injuries, regained their health because the problems were fixed and now think all workers should be able to get such improvements as the OSHA rule provides. "They should explain from their own perspective how practical and straightforward the solutions are," he says.

As the need for volunteers continues in the campaign for the ergonomics rule, some unions are targeting activists especially close to the issue. At a Teamsters national grievance hearing this month in Coral Springs,

Fla., IBT leaders will brief business agents and local officers about the new OSHA rule, reaching out especially to union members who work for United Parcel Service. UPS was not only "one of the biggest nay-sayers

### Upcoming issues of

**America@work** will examine the opportunities and challenges of the coming legislative year. One of the toughest jobs unions face is protecting the new health and safety standard—10 years in the making—from attack.

regarding this rule making process, but [their workers] have a terrific number of back injuries and other musculoskeletal disorders directly related to manual material handling," says LaMont Byrd, IBT director of safety and health. "This is an issue near and dear to the reps, because they hear from members about it daily."

Early last year, Wayne Fernsicola, secretary-treasurer of Hillside, N.J.-based IBT Local 177 and for 18 years a UPS package driver, testified at OSHA hearings about working conditions and injuries at UPS. He's ready for the next round in the ergo fight. "They can count on me," Fernsicola says, "because the situation has not abated and the injuries keep coming." ■

—Jane Birnbaum

To find out how you can get involved, check the AFL-CIO website for updates and action ideas: [www.aflcio.org/safety/ergo.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/safety/ergo.htm).



## Lyrical Justice

**B**aldemar Velasquez, leader of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, has combined his passion for worker justice with the traditional Mexican, Tex/Mex and folk music he



grew up with in the recently released CD, "Canciones Por La Causa" ("Movement Songs").

Velasquez and the Aguila Negra Band are contributing the proceeds from the CD to sup-

port the struggle of the 2,300 farm workers who are fighting for a voice at work with the North Carolina-based Mt. Olive Pickle Co., the nation's largest pickle producer.

In "Better Than Nada," written by the late Texas songwriter Dough Sham and made popular by the Texas Tornados, Velasquez reworked the lyrics to emphasize how difficult it can be for farm workers to win justice.

"Better than *nada* [Spanish for "nothing"] means you have to take your small victories but stay determined to win this struggle and fight as long as it takes," Velasquez says.

The CD is available for \$24.95 (\$4.95 for shipping and handling and a \$20 donation to the Mt. Olive struggle). Send checks payable to FLOC to 1221 Broadway St., Toledo, Ohio 43609, or visit [www.floc.com](http://www.floc.com). ☐

## Music to Their Ears

**N**urses fighting for justice at Norton Audubon Hospital in Louisville, Ky., didn't need to get decked out in formal attire to attend the symphony—late last summer, the symphony came to them. The 400 nurses were entertained by a brass quintet as part of a "symphony for justice" by members of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians, a caucus of the Musicians Union.



The musicians were holding their annual conference in Louisville when they mounted a special march and concert—featuring the symphonic version of "Solidarity Forever"—in support of the workers' 11-year struggle against corporate owners for a voice on the job with the Nurses Professional Organization, an AFSCME affiliate.

The support was music to the nurses' ears. "They were very moved," says Kay Tillow, director of organization for the NPO.

Clara Markham, a member of the Louisville Federation of Musicians/AFM Local 11-637, says the symphony was the latest outreach effort by area troubadours to local unions. "It's good to be reminded of the power of collective bargaining." ☐

JAY MALLIN/IMPACT VISUALS



One year later: Union and community activists marked the one-year anniversary of the "Battle in Seattle" with a rally at the new IMF Center in Washington, D.C.

## Let Them Eat Caviar

**W**hile the world's banking elite dined on caviar and champagne at the inaugural reception for the new International Monetary Fund Center in Washington, D.C., hundreds of union members and activists held their own event outside in the November chill. With noisemakers, drums, chants, banners and puppet shows, activists marked the one-year anniversary of the 40,000-strong demonstrations in Seattle that stalled talks among the hundreds of international delegates attending the World Trade Organization meeting.

Speakers at the "counter-reception" said IMF and World Bank programs exacerbate poverty in developing countries and lower workers' wages and standards in the United States.

The new IMF Center, with public exhibits and glossy publications for sale, represents a superficial public relations move rather than any substantive policy change, says Njoki Njoroge Njehu, director of the 50 Years Is Enough Network, which co-sponsored the counter-reception along with the Center for Economic Justice, a nonprofit representing low-income and minority consumers.

"While their new exhibits bemoan the problem of debt, they fail to mention how the IMF has become a debt collector and manager on behalf of private banks and powerful governments," says Njehu. "While they speak of their goal of poverty reduction, they continue to impose policies that mean mass layoffs, reductions in health services and education, higher prices, less access to credit, reductions in minimum wage laws and erosion of workers' rights." ☐

## Catching Up

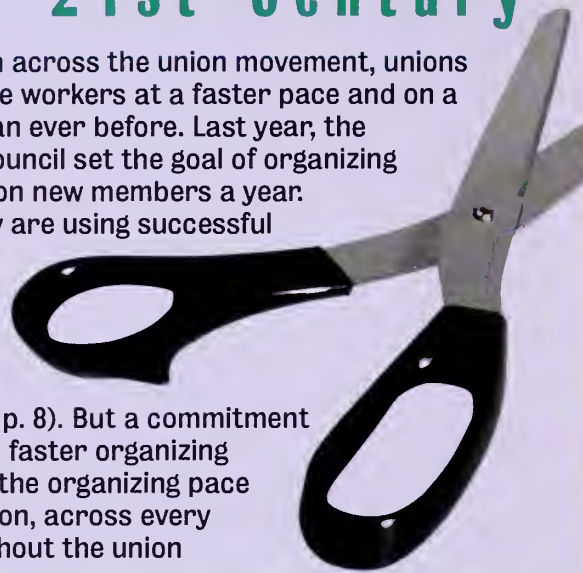
**I**t took almost a year for them to take notice, but even writers at the *Business Journal* have acknowledged the union advantage when it comes to improving the lives of working families.

In a Nov. 22, 2000, article, the *Journal* cites a January 2000 Bureau of Labor Statistics survey showing union members' median wages were 38 percent higher than nonunion workers. Working families have known that for years. ☐



# Organizing for the 21st Century

**T**o build strength across the union movement, unions need to organize workers at a faster pace and on a bigger scale than ever before. Last year, the AFL-CIO Executive Council set the goal of organizing at the pace of 1 million new members a year. Many unions already are using successful strategies to help workers win a voice on the job, in their communities and in the global economy (see story, p. 8). But a commitment to bigger, better and faster organizing means accelerating the organizing pace within each local union, across every industry and throughout the union movement.



## Making It Real

Here are the numbers of members local unions and districts need to organize to meet the million-members-per-year mark.

Local Union Size	Number of Members Per Year
50,000	3,600
25,000	1,800
15,000	1,080
10,000	720
5,000	360
1,000	72
500	36

Source: AFL-CIO/Current Population Survey, 1999/U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

## Organizing by Industry/Organizing Smart

**At a million-member pace, this is how many members unions would gain...**

**...And after one year, unions would increase their share of the workforce to this much:**

### Industry

Hospitals	50,405	14.6%
State & Local Gov't	432,792	40.9%
Trucking	31,096	24.0%
Grocery Stores	46,529	22.1%
Elem & Sec Teachers	134,450	57.3%
Motor Vehicles & Parts	33,681	41.0%
Electricians	21,449	44.5%
Telephone Comm	27,711	29.7%
Iron & Steel	11,402	30.9%
Aircraft & Parts	10,728	30.5%
Laborers	13,782	22.0%
Pulp & Paper	6,288	41.5%
Hotels/Motels	10,657	11.6%
Apparel	3,955	10.6%
Federal Gov't (not postal)	75,384	34.5%
Bakery Products	4,268	32.4%
Sheet Metal Workers	4,904	40.4%
Agriculture	1,029	2.9%

Source: AFL-CIO/Current Population Survey, 1999/U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



## MUSIC

Mann and Julius Margolin



Go Before We Sleep

*"Miles to Go Before We Sleep,"* by George Mann and Julius Margolin, includes such original folk and bluegrass songs as "We Demand a Living Wage," and "Somebody Robbed the Pension Plan," as well as such favorites as "We

Shall Not Be Moved/This Little Light of Mine." Mann, a union activist who grew up playing in rock bands, and Margolin, an octogenarian and former CIO organizer who edits Theatrical Stage Employee Local 52's newsletter, have performed together on stage and on picket lines in New York since 1998. \$14 for the CD, \$10 for the cassette. Send a check or money order to George Mann, P.O. Box 560, Stony Brook, N.Y. 117790-0560. For more information, e-mail [georgeandjulius@worldnet.att.net](mailto:georgeandjulius@worldnet.att.net). ☐

## WEBSIGHTING

[www.aflcio.org/articles/minimum\\_wage/living.pdf](http://www.aflcio.org/articles/minimum_wage/living.pdf)—Find out the answers to the most frequently asked questions about living wage laws in a new report produced by the AFL-CIO Public Policy Department. Learn how a living wage differs from a minimum wage, whether it costs taxpayer dollars and why such laws are important for communities. The report is a .pdf (portable document format) file that requires Adobe® Acrobat® Reader™. For more information, call 202-637-5177. ☐

## REPORTS

*Living Wage Issue Guide*, available on the Economic Policy Institute's website, provides basic facts about the living wage issue, an extensive list of resources, a "frequently asked questions" section and a chart detailing the provisions of living wage ordinances across the nation as they relate to contractors and subsidy recipients. The site links to nine EPI publications on living wage issues and identifies 25 other living wage resources, most of which link to other websites. Available at [www.epinet.org](http://www.epinet.org).

*Work Without Justice: Low Wage Immigrant Laborers* is one in a series of reports about at-risk immigrants produced by the Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc. This report tracks immigrant laborers from their countries of origin on often perilous journeys to the United States, and documents the harsh conditions immigrants—especially immigrants smuggled by organized crime syndicates—find after they arrive in this country. Twenty-five case studies focus on day laborers, service-sector employees, migrant farm workers and immigrants in the meatpacking and poultry industries. \$10. Send check or money order to CLINIC, The McCormick Pavilion, 415 Michigan Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017, Attn: At-Risk Reports. For more information, phone 202-635-2556; to download an order form, visit: [www.cliniclegal.org/publications.htm](http://www.cliniclegal.org/publications.htm). ☐

## PUBLICATIONS

*Great Labor Quotations: Sourcebook and Reader*, edited by Peter Bollen, categorizes 1,371 quotations in such chapters as "This Working Life," "Bread and Butter," "Politics" and "Voices for Labor." Bollen, a member of the Postal Workers, Communications Workers of America and the National Writers Union/UAW, is editor of *Northeast News Service*, a union trade journal. *Great Labor Quotations* includes a resource directory, selected bibliography, author and keyword indexes and historical photographs and cartoons. \$19.95. Red Eye Press.



*Globalization from Below: The Power of Solidarity*, by Jeremy Brecher, Tim Costello and Brendan Smith, outlines a program for strengthening the coalitions that seek to change the global forces guided "from above" by corporate greed by laying out the possibilities open to the emerging worldwide social movement for global justice "from below." The authors provide a seven-step approach to facilitate the convergence of many constituencies' goals into a framework that empowers those intent on a global economy that works for people in every nation. \$13 paperback, \$40 hardcover. South End Press. Available at bookstores or order online at [www.southendpress.org](http://www.southendpress.org).

*The Working Class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret*, by Michael Zweig, examines "class" in the United States by defining it as power at the workplace, rather than by income and lifestyle. The extent to which people have the power to organize and direct production results in three classes: the capitalist class, the middle class and the working class—the latter accounting for 60 percent of the workforce. Zweig, a professor of economics at State University of New York, Stony Brook, and a member of the state executive board of United University Professors/AFT Local 2190, asks the reader to envision the potential to develop working-class power based on working-class values of fairness, democracy, human dignity and recognition of mutual responsibility. \$20. Cornell University Press, [www.cornellpress.cornell.edu](http://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu). ☐

## "Blue Plate Specials,"

an exhibit featuring oil paintings of waitresses, dishwashers, cooks, truck drivers and stockyard workers who frequented Scoville's Café in East St. Louis, Ill., will be on exhibit at the George Meany Memorial Archives outside Washington, D.C., through Feb. 23. Barbara Savan's paintings depict the people the artist grew up with and capture the gritty reality of Scoville's workers and patrons. The Meany Center is located at 10000 New Hampshire Ave., Silver Spring, Md. 20903. For more information, call 301-431-5451. ☐







NOMINATE YOUR COMMUNITY TODAY  
IS YOUR COMMUNITY A  
**UNION  
CITY?**

**Does your local union movement:**

- ✓ Make organizing priority No. 1?
- ✓ Mobilize to support workers fighting for a voice at work?
- ✓ Educate working families about a Working Families Agenda and back supportive candidates?
- ✓ Reflect the diversity of our union movement?
- ✓ Communicate our union values through the local media?
- ✓ Build coalitions to support high-road economic development?

**If so, then you're already on the road to becoming a Union City.**

Union Cities will be recognized at the 2001 AFL-CIO Biennial Convention for helping to reinvigorate today's union movement. Nominate your central labor council to be a Union City—it's easy!

■ Do it online! Visit [www.aflcio.org/unioncity](http://www.aflcio.org/unioncity) and complete the nomination form.

■ Do it by fax! Send your nomination to 202-637-5012. Include the name of your central labor council, your city and state and tell us why you think your hometown should be a Union City.

*To learn more about becoming a Union City, contact your central labor council, or call the AFL-CIO Field Mobilization Department, 202-637-5280. (For a list of labor councils, visit [www.aflcio.org/unioncity](http://www.aflcio.org/unioncity).)*

**Crow a little. Match your union pride with local pride  
and nominate your community to be a Union City!**





Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

FEBRUARY 2001

# America @work

*We Gained  
Respect as  
Human Beings'*

**ALSO INSIDE:**

A Permanent  
Voice@Work

Respect Work,  
Strengthen Family

Making the  
Colorado Miracle



## SPEAKING OUT ON THE 2000 ELECTION

**"GEORGE W. BUSH** will try to quickly get repeal of the inheritance tax. Among his economic ideas, the repeal has the most support [among] Senate millionaires. The unions and the charities, which would see charitable contributions decline with repeal, must fight it. Harry and Louise-type TV ads opposing repeal could help. The repeal and the attempt to further solidify an American aristocracy must be stopped!"—*Paul Tracy, Oceanside, Calif.*

### SAY WHAT?

**What issues is your union planning to promote as part of the *Respect Work, Strengthen Family* campaign?**

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's Say What? Selected responses will appear in a future issue. America@work, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; phone: 202-637-5010; fax: 202-508-6908; e-mail: [atwork@aflcio.org](mailto:atwork@aflcio.org)

### HERE'S WHAT YOU SAY

#### IS THE BEST GRASSROOTS ACTIVITY YOUR LOCAL UNION CONDUCTED FOR THE NOVEMBER ELECTIONS:

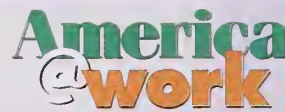
"We are a 700-member local of the Operating Engineers representing classified school employees. We are proud to have played a part in defeating an anti-union 'charter schools' measure....Multibillionaire Paul Allen and hamburger moguls Jim and Fawn Spady pumped more than \$3 million into a campaign...[that would have] prohibited workers from joining other school workers' bargaining units....We did several membership mailings and distributed literature door to door while working on other election campaigns. In the end, the measure failed....[W]ith member involvement, commitment and perseverance, big money profit-mongers can be defeated."—*David Westberg, business manager, IUOE Local 609, Seattle*

**"I AM SO THANKFUL** that you have organized democratic demonstrations against the unjust decision of the U.S. Supreme Court on the vote count in Florida....[I]f the AFL-CIO plans to be a party to any legal suits brought against Katherine Harris or other officials involved in hijacking the election in Florida for the Republicans, I fully support that action!"—*Michelle LaVoie, Graduate Student Employees Union/Communications Workers of America Local 1188, Buffalo, N.Y.*

**"I AM SO GLAD** you are fighting the strong, rich, powerful elitists that are backing Bush. This man is a threat to our freedom. He is not qualified or experienced. We are fighting the media, which seem to be for big money, too."—*Cathi Lowery, Vancouver, Wash.*

**"I STRONGLY SUPPORT** the position that the AFL-CIO took on the Attorney General nominee [John] Ashcroft issue. I believe as many Americans believe, such as my Senator Ted Kennedy, that this is not a message that the United States wants to project to the nation and the world: to have a man such as Ashcroft be our attorney general. Thank you for supporting and representing the American way, the way this nation was built—the union way."—*Timothy C. Smith, retired Sgt. 1st Class, U.S. Army Signal Corps, Beverly City councilor, Beverly, Mass.*

AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in America@work.



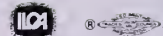
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Jim, Seattle Labor Ready



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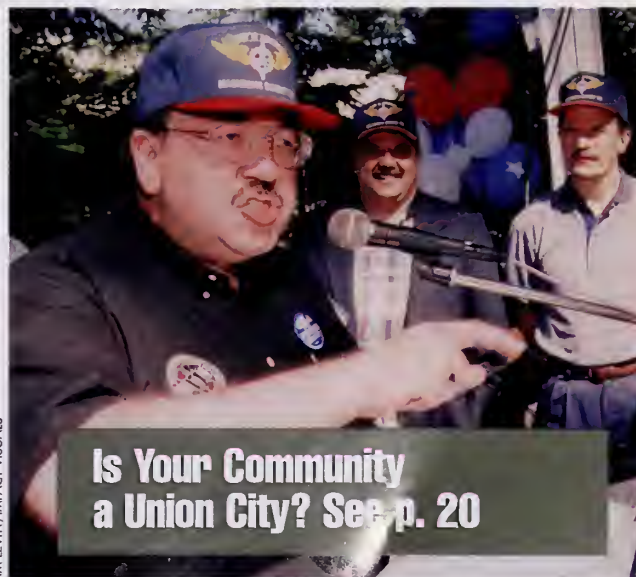
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JIM LEVITT/IMPACT VISUALS



## AFL-CIO Rededicates Building, Renews Mission



EARL DOTTER

2001: President Clinton celebrates the rededication of the AFL-CIO building in the final days of his presidency.

President Clinton became the second U.S. president to participate in the dedication of the AFL-CIO headquarters building in Washington, D.C. After a three-year renovation, the building was rededicated in a Jan. 8 ceremony attended by members of the AFL-CIO Executive Council, Labor Secretary Alexis Herman, Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) and AFL-CIO staff. Clinton, who was introduced by Susan Hagan, a member of Electrical Workers Local 38 in Cleveland, expressed his appreciation for the union movement's successes in improving the lives of all working families and encouraged activists to step up their efforts.

"This building is a symbol of today's labor movement. It's on the same founda-

tions you started, but you've modernized it for a new age. You've adapted to the new challenges and new opportunities," Clinton said.

The building's first cornerstone was placed in April 1955, when it was the American Federation of Labor building. After the December 1955 merger of the AFL with the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the building was dedicated in June 1956 as the AFL-CIO building. Former President Eisenhower, a Republican, attended the cornerstone ceremony, declaring it was "right neighborly" of the AFL to invite him. In 1956, Eisenhower walked across Lafayette Park from the White House to join union members and leaders in dedicating the building.

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney reminded the audience that just as the building is being rededicated, the union movement is renewing its vow to "revitalize our movement and restore the voices of working families." ☐



FRANK ALEXANDER NEGATIVE COLLECTION/GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVE

1956: President Eisenhower joins AFL-CIO President George Meany in dedicating the newly completed AFL-CIO building.

## Study Finds Most Can't Take Unpaid Leave

When Nancy Lagana's father underwent surgery last year, she couldn't take paid leave to be with him. So the phone sales consultant and Communications Workers of America Local 2222 member took three days of unpaid leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act. While getting the time off wasn't hard, doing without wages was, and "paid leave would have been welcome," she says today.

Lagana's experience tallies with the new U.S. Department of Labor study of the FMLA, which since its 1993 enactment has helped 35 million eligible employees take unpaid leave to care for a new baby or sick family member. While finding employees generally are pleased with the law and most employers have no trouble implement-

ing it, the study also found 78 percent of respondents said their inability to afford unpaid leave was one reason they did not take needed leave in 1995. To enable more workers to have access to family medical leave, some unions such as UAW and Communications Workers of America are bargaining paid leave that goes beyond FMLA.

"Without a family leave benefit, millions of Americans will not realize the promise of the FMLA," says National Partnership for Women & Families Vice Chairperson Donna Lenhoff, who chaired the 1995 Commission on Leave, which released a report on FMLA in 1996.

The full report, "Balancing the Needs of Families and Employers," is available at [www.dol.gov/dol/asp/public/fmla/main.htm](http://www.dol.gov/dol/asp/public/fmla/main.htm). ☐

## Voice@Work in Seattle

Backed by strong community support, 755 workers at Seattle's Northwest Hospital won a voice at work in January with SEIU 1199NW in the largest private-sector union victory in Washington State since 1997.

To bolster the workers' efforts, union members and supporters who live in the community and use the hospital's services—including members of the King County Labor Council—came together as the Northwest Neighbors for Fairness.

"We believe that when employees have a voice at work, health care quality is improved," said Barb Flye, the group's executive director, at a news conference during which Northwest Neighbors for Fairness challenged the hospital to follow a code of fair conduct during the election and accept the election results if the union won. Sixteen local elected officials and two members of Congress ultimately joined the coalition in requesting a fair election.

Without the employer intimidation and harassment workers often face when seeking a voice on the job, the employees voted for the union. "We give the hospital credit for not hiring a union-buster," says Organizing Director Curt Williams.

"Northwest Neighbors surrounding the hospital were very supportive and instrumental in helping us get union representation," says Judy Billick, a Northwest Hospital secretary. "I really think their support helped energize us about the campaign."

Northwest Neighbors for Fairness pledged to maintain its support for the workers during contract negotiations. ☐



## Teachers + Unions = Higher Grades

**W**hen teachers have a voice at work, their students do better on key college admissions tests. A new study finds a “significant and positive relationship” between the presence of teacher unions and the strong performance of students on the SAT and ACT, the tests that determine students’ college placement. In the Winter 2000 edition of the *Harvard Educational Review*, three scholars from the University of South Carolina and Indiana University show that “states with a greater percentage of teachers in unions tend to report higher test performance of their students.”

“It’s not surprising to find higher educational performance and accountability levels in states with strong teachers’ unions,” says AFT President Sandra Feldman. “We push for the resources and policies that will help achieve high standards and improve schools. Teachers’ unions want what children need.”

The magazine is available for \$15 by calling 800-513-0763 or clicking on <http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~hepg/herbiorder.html>. ☐

## COLLEGE CAMPUS WEARS UNION-MADE GEAR

**N**ow that students on dozens of college campuses have ensured the baseball caps and T-shirts emblazoned with their school logos are not made in sweatshops—where workers are paid low wages and often toil in dangerous and unhealthy environments—anti-sweatshop activists at Occidental College in Los Angeles have taken that commitment to workers’ rights one step further. In what may be a first, students worked with campus officials to offer a union-made logo T-shirt for sale.

“The only way to certify that a plant is upholding a ‘code of conduct’ is to have a union shop,” says Nicole Drake, a senior at Occidental who is active in her campus anti-sweatshop group.

The shirts are displayed in a “sweat-free” zone in the bookstore, next to nonunion-made clothes—which often have higher price tags. The campus gear is made by UNITE members at Plains T-Shirt in Plains, Pa. ☐

**Model college:** Occidental College Professor Peter Dreier, his wife, Terry Meng, and 3-year-old daughters, Amelia and Sarah, promote union-made campus wear.

## SPOTLIGHT

### Living the Dream

**M**artin Luther King Jr.’s dream of economic justice for all people can best be achieved by building political power and fighting for economic justice, union leaders declared during the national celebration of the slain civil rights leader’s birthday.

“We take what we have today for granted—the right to vote and the right to unions. But a lot of folks fought for those rights and Dr. King died for them. So we need to educate people about that or we could lose those things,” said Willie Lacy, a retired UNITE member from Louisville, Ky.

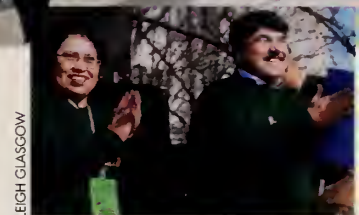
During the AFL-CIO’s annual King Day celebration Jan. 11–15 in Greensboro, N.C., Lacy and more than 700 union members planned strategies and rallied to further the common goals of the union and civil rights movements. The five-day celebration, which included volunteer efforts, a prayer breakfast and a King Day rally, focused on the political enfranchisement of the poor and people of color. “Dr. King believed in voting power. He knew that from the vote

flow all our rights,” said AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson at a rally for voters’ rights, where many participants held signs slamming President George W. Bush’s election: “Legal Not Legit. Justice Won’t Quit,” they said. Citing “shocking assaults on voting rights of minorities, students and senior citizens” in Florida in the 2000 election, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka said the AFL-CIO is taking the lead in fighting for fundamental reform of the nation’s campaign finance system to “enhance voter participation and eliminate discrimination.” The federation supports such reforms as universal voter registration at age 18, same-day registration and voting, more uniform voter files and strengthening the Voter Rights Act.

The federation also is backing a suit filed by the national NAACP and civil rights groups Jan. 10 citing widespread voting rights violations in Florida. While in Greensboro, activists honored King’s commitment to service by completing several community service projects and presented the annual “At the River I Stand” award to Transport Workers President Sonny Hall for his contributions to furthering King’s legacy. ☐



**Honoring the dream:** AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka and AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson (inset) join hundreds of union members in Greensboro, N.C., for events honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



LEIGH GLASGOW





**Diverse:** The cast of the TV series "Gideon's Crossing," shown with executive producer Paul Attanasio at center, is one of the most diverse, with actors who include two women, two African Americans, a Latino and an Asian.

## Some Minority Acting Roles on the Rise

**T**he number of acting roles going to African American and Latino performers increased in 1999, but roles for Native Americans and Asian/Pacific Islanders remained the same, according to employment statistics released by the Screen Actors.

"The American portrayal in films and television is moving slowly but steadily toward the reality of our American scene," says SAG President William Daniels.

African Americans were cast in 14.1 percent of roles in 1999, up from 13.4 percent in 1998. Latinos were cast in 4.4 percent, compared with 3.5 percent in 1998. Roles for Asian/Pacific Islanders and Native Americans remained

stagnant at 2.2 percent and 0.2 percent, respectively.

Although women make up the majority of Americans, men had 62 percent of the roles cast in 1999.

"We hope to convince industry insiders that diversity can improve their bottom line," Daniels says. "We believe many producers and programmers are missing opportunities to reach a larger, broader audience through more diverse casting."

The statistics are based on all television and theatrical productions reported to SAG through the Casting Data Report, which tracks casting of shows under SAG contracts, which do not include most nonprime-time programming. @

## Tribute to Mother Jones

Union activists dedicated a Maryland Historical Trust marker commemorating Mary Harris "Mother" Jones as the "Grand Old Champion of Labor" Dec. 2 near the George Meany Center in Silver Spring, Md. Taking part in the ceremony: Union troubadour Joe Glazer, Labor Heritage Foundation Secretary Saul Schnideman, Coalition of Labor Union Women President Gloria Johnson and Mine Workers President Cecil Roberts. @



DOUG GIBSON

# Real Independence Means a Living Wage

**U**nscrupulous employers bent on shortchanging workers often intentionally misclassify them as "independent contractors" and pay them less than the minimum wage. But union members are fighting back—and winning.

In December, members of Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union Local 338/Food and Commercial Workers in New York City won a \$3 million settlement from A&P after an investigation by state Attorney General Eliot Spitzer into wage and hour violations by the supermarket giant. The 225 workers deliver groceries for supermarket chains in Manhattan and are employed by Chelsea Trucking and Hudson Delivery. Before forming a union last year, "the jobs included 60- to 80-hour workweeks, outside, in all

types of weather, for an average of \$1.10 an hour," says John Durso, Local 338 president. "The employees also had to rent delivery carts and jackets if they wanted to work—all under the guise of being 'independent contractors,'" Durso says. During contract negotiations, state officials and the National Employment Law Project began investigating allegations of abuses. The settlement means that each worker will receive as much as \$60,000.

"I will buy my little brother a computer so he can do even better in school," says Siaka "Jack" Diakite who, like many of his fellow union members, is an immigrant from West Africa. "Before we had a union, we worked terrible hours for little money and were treated like slaves. Now, we have rules to protect us." @

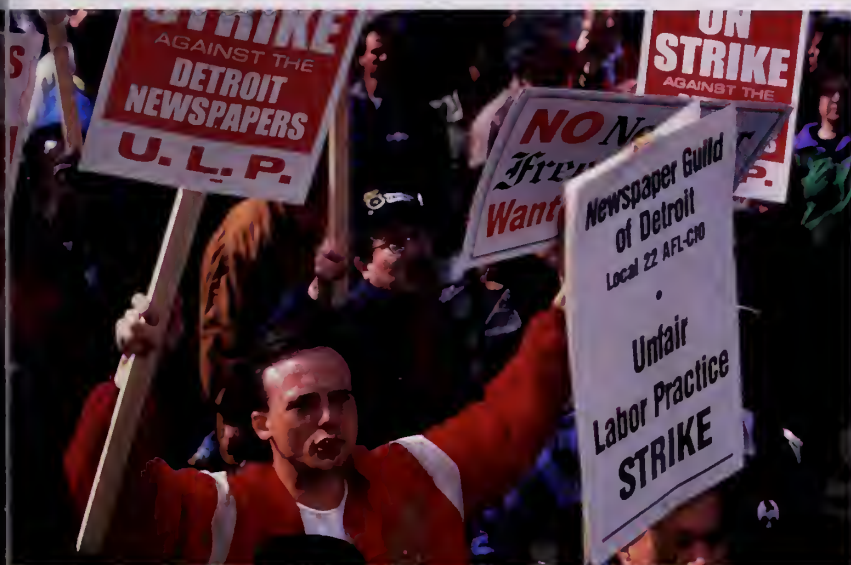
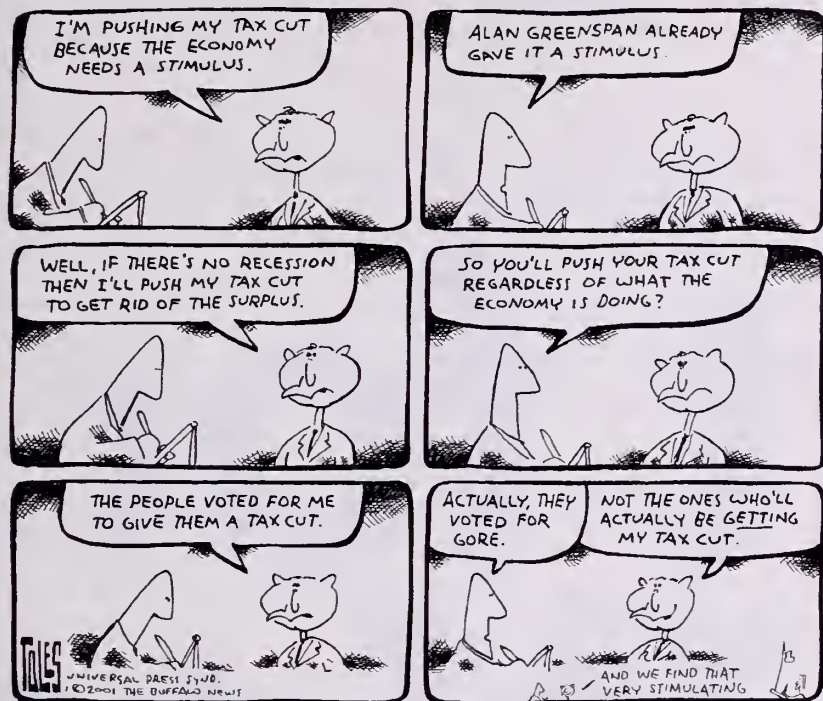


In the bag: Siaka Diakite is among 225 grocery deliverers who won a massive \$3 million settlement from A&P supermarket for wage and hour violations.

RWDSU/UFCW LOCAL 338



# Tax Cuts for Whom?



work: The five-year Detroit News and Detroit Free Press struggle ended in December.

## Two Lockouts End

Two long-term lockouts ended recently as workers ratified new contracts. In Pasadena, Texas, the 252 workers at Crown Central Petroleum Corp. voted to accept a new contract Jan. 17. Under the pact, the members of PACE International Union Local 4-227 will receive wage increases and protected seniority rights. The lockout began on Feb. 5, 1996. In Detroit, members of Teamsters locals 372 and 2040 ratified contracts with *The Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press* Dec. 17, ending a strike launched in July 1995 by members of IBT, The Newspaper Guild/Communications Workers of America, Graphic Communications International Union and the International Typographers Union. Workers were locked out in 1997. ☐

### OUT FRONT

For Leza Collins de Portillo it was mandatory overtime (see page 12). For Norman Davis, it was the high cost of his mother's prescription drugs. For Paul Dodge, it was the lack of benefits that came with being forced into the "nonstandard" workforce. These workers and millions more have been slapped with the caustic reality of balancing work and family life.

Today's unions are recommitting to fight in their behalf in two connected ways: We will advocate a strong *Respect Work, Strengthen Family* agenda in our workplaces, communities, government at every level and in the global economy. And we will help far more workers win union membership and the family-friendly contracts it brings.

Union contracts have provided Collins de Portillo and some 13 million other workers desperately needed assistance in balancing work and family obligations. Now our unions have committed to helping 1 million more workers gain the union advantage each year (see January 2001 *America@work*). This emphasis on organizing is a Priority 1 effort to grow our movement so we can enact a *Respect Work, Strengthen Family* agenda to benefit *all* working families.

Respecting work and strengthening family means making work pay by raising the minimum wage and enacting and enforcing equal pay laws. It means making work safe by putting the new OSHA ergonomics standard to work. It means making work fair by securing full rights for all workers, native-born and immigrants, wherever they work. It also means health insurance and affordable prescription drugs for workers, their children and their elderly parents. It means family-nurturing workplaces, leave to attend to family needs, high-quality child care and great schools. It means a strong Social Security system and global trade rules that protect rather than abandon working families. And it means reforming our election systems so working families are guaranteed a strong voice in America's politics.

As good as our unions are at mobilizing members—and we proved it again in November—to make the kind of difference we must make on Capitol Hill and in state houses, our unions must grow. The 13 million union members we worked to mobilize this fall is about the same number we worked to mobilize in 1956. And in 1960, 1964, 1968 and in every election year since. In the 44 years since Eisenhower won his second term, the U.S. workforce has doubled in size—but our unions have not grown.

For the Norman Davises, the Paul Dodges and workers like them, and for their children and aging parents, we must invest the same energy, resources and passion into organizing as we invested in the 2000 election—and even more, if that's what it takes to make sure America respects work and strengthens families. ☐

## Respect Work, Strengthen Family



BY JOHN J. SWEENEY





CONSTRUCTION TEMPS

# Fight for

A PERMANENT

# Voice

ICA WORKS  
BETTER  
EN WORKERS  
HAVE A  
VOICE  
AFL-CIO

"I told a contractor  
was only getting \$7  
an hour. He said,  
'What? I'm paying  
Labor Ready \$24  
an hour.'"

Mark. Renton  
Labor Ready

ESTÁ MAR-  
CHA NO ES  
DE FIESTA ES  
DE LUCHA Y DE  
PROTESTA

IRON WORKERS  
LOCAL #86



SUPPORT  
WORKING  
FAMILIES

IRON WORKERS  
LOCAL #86



SUPPORT  
WORKING  
FAMILIES



Fighting back: More than 1,200 Labor Ready workers and their supporters rallied in Tacoma, Wash., last fall to highlight the company's exploitation of its workers.



**E**very day at temporary employment “hiring halls” around the country, some 250,000 men and women are dispatched to almost exclusively nonunion, lower-paying construction jobs. One of the biggest construction temp worker agencies—and the most notorious for exploiting its workers—is Labor Ready Inc.

The multinational company—with more than 800 offices in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, Canada and the United Kingdom—supplies manual laborers to employers. Many Labor Ready workers are forced into the day labor world because they lack transportation to get to good permanent jobs or training. That makes them ripe for exploitation.

To bring justice and respect to the workers at Labor Ready and other temp agencies, the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department last year launched the national temps campaign to gain a voice at work for construction temps.

“Temp workers often are not paid for the right hours, are exposed to workplace hazards, receive inadequate training and are denied a voice at work,” says BCTD President Edward Sullivan.

With help from the national temps campaign, workers are suing Labor Ready for its pay practices and the company is the subject of investigations for possible violations of workers’ compensation laws. Workers and their allies from Tacoma, Wash., to New York City have launched massive public rallies protesting Labor Ready’s practices.

Laborers President Terence O’Sullivan, whose union is a key part of the national temps campaign, says, “Employers who ignore the law, and more importantly ignore the fundamental right of workers to bring home a living wage, must be held accountable. Our union is committed to seeing that all workers get the respect, the dignity and the wages they deserve.”

**“Employers who ignore the fundamental right of workers to bring home a living wage must be held accountable.”**

**—Laborers President Terence O’Sullivan**

COURTESY LABORERS



# at Work

BY MIKE HALL

Labor Ready:

**Work Today,  
Broke Tomorrow**  
Justice for Temp Workers  
Paid Today • Broke Tomorrow

## Boom time for temp agencies

With more than 450 construction temp firms in the nation, the construction temp workforce is increasing faster than the overall temp industry’s growth rate of 15 percent per year. Annual revenue for construction and industrial temp agencies rocketed from \$4 billion in 1991 to \$15 billion in 1998, according to the BCTD.

Some of these temp firms are highly specialized, focusing solely on construction. They dispatch such workers as carpenters, electricians, sheet metal workers, plumbers and other mechanical crafts. Other temp companies specialize in day labor, sending out tens of thousands of workers every day, many to construction sites. Labor Ready is by far the industry leader in this category.

“If we don’t help these workers organize and bring them into membership, in 10 years there will be as many temp workers as there are union members,” Sullivan says.

The growth mirrors the workplace changes occurring elsewhere in the economy. Last summer, the U.S. General Accounting Office reported that 30 percent of the nation’s workforce labored in contin-

gent jobs—temporary or part-time positions as independent contractors.

“The downsizing of standard employment and its replacement by contingent jobs are a core feature of the new economy. This strategy is part of a worldwide trend that is eroding the established protections of workers around the globe,” according to *Contingent Workers Fight for Fairness*, a 2000 report from the National Alliance for Fair Employment. NAFPE is a network of more than three dozen community, union, immigrant, faith-based and civil rights organizations.

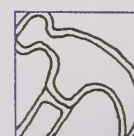
## Payday rip-off

Labor Ready’s worker recruitment slogan promises “Work Today, Paid Today”—an attractive incentive for someone scrambling for much-needed cash. But the workers at Labor Ready, making the minimum wage or barely above it, say they never see all they earn. Many are charged for transportation to and from worksites, for work equipment and even to secure their daily pay.

“Labor Ready charged us \$11 a day to transport us. They also deducted our pay for hard hats, gloves and boots,” says Timothy







AP-OO FILE PHOTO

**"If we don't organize temp workers...in 10 years, there will be as many temp workers as union members."**

**—BCTD President Edward Sullivan**

Green, a former Labor Ready worker in Atlanta who now works for the city's Task Force for the Homeless.

Labor Ready's most controversial device for siphoning back to the company part of the meager wages it pays workers is its cash-dispensing machines.

Here's how it works. Labor Ready pays workers daily in vouchers that can be used only at the company's cash machines. The machines charge each worker \$1 plus whatever change is on his or her pay stub, for an average of \$1.58, according to information from the lawsuits filed in behalf of Labor Ready workers.

That may not sound like much, but in 1999, Labor Ready's cash machine fees racked up \$7.7 million for the company's coffers, according to its annual report. Subtract the cost of installing the machines and

the scheme accounted for \$4.8 million, or 21 percent of the company's net profit.

"Skimming money from the paychecks of everyday workers—that's just plain wrong," says Levoyd Williams, a worker in Atlanta. Williams is among the plaintiffs who filed a class-action lawsuit against Labor Ready in Georgia, California and New York.

### **Skimping on safety and health**

"What's Labor Ready's safety training? It's handing you a pamphlet telling you baby stuff—almost 'do not light matches in a fuel tank,'" one Labor Ready worker remembers. (Fearing retaliation, some Labor Ready workers have asked that their names not be used.)

Labor Ready workers are shown a safety video and given what one worker calls "an idiot test" before being sent out on jobs. They receive no training or hazard information specific to their jobs, according to a suit filed by workers in Georgia.

Statistics from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration show the company has the highest workplace safety violation rate throughout the entire temp industry. The company's own numbers admit to 9,720 worker injuries in 1999, but no one knows how many workers were hurt and did not report their injuries. Based on Labor Ready's own statistics, the average Labor Ready worker is three times more likely to be injured than the average construction worker. Construction is one of the most hazardous occupations, and accounts for the largest number of workplace deaths in the nation, according to the latest study (1998) of workplace injuries and deaths by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"Why don't I complain? I don't want it on my records," says one Labor Ready veteran who's afraid of being blacklisted by company managers if he reports work-related injuries.

Many Labor Ready workers say when they get to a job site, they end up doing dangerous work for which they are not trained or qualified. Nor are they paid for the more dangerous work.

"I was sent out to this one construction job to sweep the street. But I am actually cleaning the grounds and directing traffic," says one worker. "Labor Ready classified the job as janitorial. There's cement and dump

## **Organizing for a Permanent Voice**

Henry Gallimore, assistant business manager of the Atlanta/North Georgia Building and Construction Trades Council, knows there always will be a day labor world.

But through the BCTD's national temps campaign, he is fighting to make sure the men and women who rely on temp work win the respect to which all workers are entitled and that doors to permanent work are opened for them.

Part of the BCTD campaign involves shining a spotlight on Labor Ready's exploitation of its workers with the goal of exposing the company's practices and getting the company to sign BCTD's "Temporary Agency Community Standards" petition, which supports workers' basic dignity on the job.

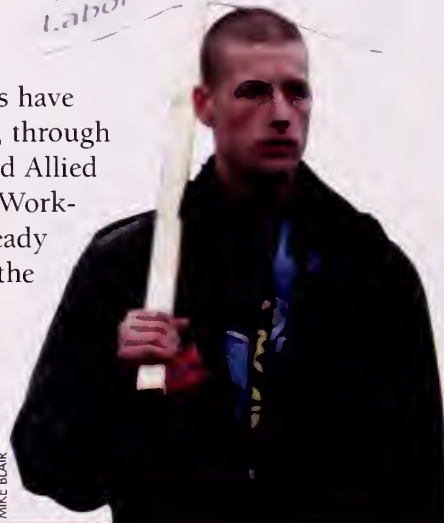
And since April, Gallimore and other Atlanta union members have been arriving in the pre-dawn hours at Labor Ready offices to talk with laborers as they gather, awaiting work.

"We know the issues and that's how we approach them. We'll ask them if they still have to pay to get a ride to the job site and let them know that's against Georgia law," Gallimore says.

Organizers also let workers know they may have other work opportunities. Gallimore says more than 150 Atlanta-area Labor Ready workers have found union work, including full-time positions, through area locals that include the Laborers, Painters and Allied Trades, Plasterers and Cement Masons and Iron Workers. With a decreasing pool of workers, Labor Ready has closed two of its metro Atlanta offices since the campaign began.

"Anybody who gets up at 4 in the morning to show up at 5 wouldn't be there if he didn't want to work. We're trying to make sure they're not exploited and that they get a chance to do better for themselves," Gallimore says. ☐

*"We call this place  
Slavery Ready."  
Slavery Ready  
Tracy, Everett  
Labor Ready*



MIKE BLAIR





**Working together:** IUPAT President Michael Monroe says unions working together can change bad corporate behavior.

trucks, backhoes and a giant drill working very close to me. It's very dangerous. I am actually acting as a flagger, but they are not paying me that. And if I speak up about that, or say that the job is dangerous, I feel that I won't get any work. I won't be able to pay my rent."

### **Cheating the system**

Last fall, the BCTD released an analysis of Labor Ready's workers' compensation records in Ohio and Washington that indicated the company may be systematically misclassifying its workers at lower "white-collar" rates rather than the higher "blue-collar labor" rate category. BCTD pressed the states to investigate the company's practices.

Labor Ready bills itself as supplying manual and blue-collar laborers for construction, warehousing, landscaping, freight handling and other industries. Yet in Washington State, it classified 47 percent of its workforce as office workers. In Ohio, the company claimed the two biggest categories of workers were retail and clerical workers.

The cost savings in workers' compensation premiums are dramatic. In Ohio, the base premium for landscaping companies in 1999

was \$10.86 for every \$100 of payroll, compared with just 43 cents per \$100 for retail. In Washington State, the rate in 1999 was \$2.24 per hour worked in construction versus just 8.2 cents per hour worked in offices.

"This is yet another example of how Labor Ready builds its income in ways that appear suspect," BCTD's Sullivan says.

### **Taking it to the boardroom**

While building trades organizers are working directly with Labor Ready workers, informing them of their rights and offering alternatives to temp work (see box, p. 10), activists also are taking the campaign for worker justice to the company's boardroom.

In Tacoma, Wash., more than 1,200 whistle-armed Labor Ready workers, union members and community supporters marched on Labor Ready's annual stockholder meeting in October to "blow the whistle" on the company's exploitation of its workers.

Inside, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, Sullivan, O'Sullivan and Painters and Allied Trades President Michael Monroe joined the meeting to ask questions about the company's practices. BCTD owns several hundred shares of Labor Ready stock, giving it the right to attend shareholder meetings.

"The building trades' agenda of a permanent voice at work and economic justice for construction workers is supported and expanded by the AFL-CIO campaigns targeting employers such as Labor Ready. It takes many unions, working together, to change these bad corporate practices," says Monroe.

Facing fierce questioning about the company's treatment of its workers and a large decline in its stock price, company executives ended the meeting early—but the union presidents still had time to provide shareholders with an alternative corporate report, *Breaking the Golden Rule and Betraying Its Shareholders*, prepared by the BCTD.

The report delved into the company's treatment of its workers and also questioned many of its practices, including expensive perks and the cozy relationships of the firm's top management.

"I think it's important that we all join in this fight," says Green, the former Labor Ready worker in Atlanta, "because otherwise, you're going to see more of these temp agencies undermining workers. Eventually, all our jobs could be at stake." ☐

## **Take the Pledge**

The AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department report, *Breaking the Golden Rule and Betraying Its Shareholders*, encourages Labor Ready shareholders to sign the national temps campaign's "Temporary Agency Community Standards" petition and to urge Labor Ready's executives to sign on and pledge that the company agency will abide by those standards.

"Labor Ready is proving the maxim that companies that treat their workers badly end up treating shareholders badly as well," the report says.

So far, more than 25,000 individuals and community groups have signed the petition that outlines the rights every temp worker is entitled to:

- 1.** The right to form or join a union without interference from temp agencies or the client.
- 2.** The right to know about any health and safety hazards on any assignment and the right to company-provided safety equipment and paid safety training.
- 3.** The right to know the fees a temp agency charges clients for workers' services and to receive payment for all hours for which they are required to report, with deduction of fees for transportation, equipment and check-cashing clearly spelled out.
- 4.** The right to refuse, without punishment or discrimination, any job assignment that would expose workers to dangerous conditions or hazardous materials they are inadequately trained or prepared for or that pays less than they customarily earn.
- 5.** The right to refuse to cross picket lines. ☐



# RESPECT WORK STRENGTHEN FAMILY AFL-CIO

*Respect Work, Strengthen Family* encompasses organizing, bargaining, the global fairness and Voice@Work campaigns and supports the union movement's goals to strengthen retirement security and health care, expand prescription drug benefits and improve education

BY JANE BIRNBAUM

## Regularly forced to work mandatory overtime,

Leza Collins de Portillo, a member of Communications Workers of America Local 2108, often raced from her job at Verizon in Maryland to retrieve her toddler at day care. If she was late, the charge was \$5 the first minute, \$1 a minute thereafter—an expense that hurt the family's finances. And after taking off 16 weeks, half unpaid, to care for a new baby who was born sick last year, she had to resume a full work schedule immediately. A few months later, the newborn died.

Today, expecting another child, Collins de Portillo, 24, says her concerns about making

job and family work are being addressed. Under a contract workers negotiated last fall after a two-week strike, managers first must ask for volunteers for overtime—so far, Collins de Portillo hasn't had to work any. The contract also enables her to return to work gradually after giving birth. "Now I have more time for family, which is important to me and my husband," she says.

For Collins de Portillo, *Respect Work, Strengthen Family*—the new AFL-CIO umbrella theme for national and state-level action—has personal meaning. "I feel respected at work and my family has been strengthened," says Collins de Portillo.

Combining interests and strengths in workplace issues with broader concerns about work's encroachment on family life also feeds into organizing, bargaining and Voice@Work campaigns. Advocating for working families in the broadest sense can enable unions to tie issues to the "working families" theme that unfriendly interests have co-opted. "Bush and Big Business only respect work that makes lots of money; they talk family values, but they won't hire enough people to do the work and instead impose overtime on workers that keeps them away from their families and then blame teachers when children run wild," says Georgia State AFL-CIO President Richard Ray.

By tying together key federal and state issues, "*Respect Work, Strengthen Family* will help us connect workers nationwide," says

Bernard Brommer, president of the Minnesota AFL-CIO. "With conservatives feeling their oats again," he explains, "members across the political spectrum can understand the importance of uniting against goofy ideas that threaten our economic, social or family security."

Unions always are fighting "goofy" ideas and pressing sound ones at the national and state levels. Now, state federation leaders are planning town hall meetings to air *Respect Work, Strengthen Family* issues. "These meetings connect members and their elected local, state and national representatives, giving them a chance to have one-on-one discussions," says Diane McDaniel, political director of the Washington State Labor Council. In the AFL-CIO's Ask a Working Woman 2000 survey, working women overwhelmingly listed time, pay and benefit issues as the top priorities—regardless of age, salary, ethnic background, education level or any other factor.

A top priority for the Washington State Labor Council and other state federations, including those in Minnesota, Maine and Massachusetts, is creating paid family leave programs with insurancelike funding mechanisms to assist workers who must take care of family needs. Because of her contract and her husband's wages, Audrey Richardson, a member of UAW Local 2320 and a Boston legal services attorney, plans to take off nine months—four paid, five unpaid—after giving birth this spring. "I can't imagine returning to work within weeks of giving birth, but that is what most of my clients must do," she says.

Other *Respect Work, Strengthen Family* state issues union leaders say are likely to crop up in the upcoming town hall meetings include:

- **Lowering the cost of prescription drugs** with bulk-purchasing plans for Medicare recipients in states including Michigan, Illinois and Missouri.

- **Safeguarding managed-care patients.** Pending passage of a federal Patients' Bill of Rights, Illinois union activists are moving forward with a state measure.

- **Raising state minimum wages to the current federal minimum wage or higher.** In Georgia, for example, legislation to raise the state minimum wage would most benefit farm workers, who today make \$3.25 hourly. State and local labor bodies



also will join the AFL-CIO in grassroots mobilization efforts to raise the federal minimum wage.

• **Protecting worker training programs.** The Minnesota state federation is fighting to maintain financing for a dislocated worker program. "It's a highly effective and heavily used program even in the midst of a so-called booming economy," explains Bill Moore, administrative assistant to the president at the Minnesota AFL-CIO. "Our downsizings are at a record pace today."

• **Reforming state unemployment and workers' compensation insurance programs.** In Georgia, union activists have partnered with women's groups to support legislation making it easier for part-time workers to qualify for unemployment benefits, reforms that will help part-timers who are in and out of the workforce because of family issues. Georgia activists also seek to tie worker's compensation benefits to weekly wages, so that an injured \$1,000-a-week skilled trades worker, for example, takes home a bigger benefit to pay family bills than someone who makes \$500.

### National action

At the national level, union leaders say the *Respect Work, Strengthen Families* theme will energize a variety of offensive and defensive actions—some current and some new—including:

• **Advancing the new federal ergonomics protection rule.** "We have an active, good and proven program in place," says Ron Kline, UAW Local 171 health and

safety representative at the Mack truck facility in Hagerstown, Md. However, he adds, in some other UAW shops, "it's an uphill battle, and protecting workers in nonunion shops against ergonomics injuries is a hopeless situation without federal regulations."

• **Encouraging low-wage workers to enroll children in the federal Child Health Insurance Program.** A health bill Congress passed in December included union-supported language that allows states to use schools as CHIP enrollment sites. This dovetails with work under way by AFT, the National Education Association and the Center for Policy Alternatives, a progressive policy advocacy organization, in which teachers would assist with enrollment.

• **Pushing for a Medicare drug benefit and strengthening Social Security.** Unions will fight for the creation by Congress of a universal, voluntary prescription Medicare drug benefit, plus strengthening Social Security as a provider of guaranteed, defined benefits for all retirees. "The drug plan that Mr. Bush proposed during the campaign is obviously inadequate," says UAW President Stephen Yokich. "And anyone who thinks that shifting money from Social Security into stocks is a foolproof way to increase retirement savings has only to look at the markets' recent sharp drops to realize that what Bush and others propose is a very risky business."

• **Advocating the high road in economic issues.** As part of the global fairness campaign, unions will continue fighting to ensure trade and investment

agreements incorporate core workers' rights, environmental and worker protections. Issues on the table this year include the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas and a series of bilateral trade agreements.

• **Pressing for compliance with the federal Fair Labor Standards Act,** which protects overtime pay and gives scheduling control to workers who prefer time-off compensation, and resisting efforts to remove overtime protections from millions of workers and attempts to substitute comp time for overtime pay.

• **Continue pushing for a federal minimum wage increase** not tied to overtime protection rollbacks.

• **Defeating any re-introduction of so-called TEAM Act legislation** that sanctions company-controlled unions.

• **Reforming elections.** The Florida debacle revealed that working families—particularly in communities of color and among immigrants and older Americans—are disproportionately disenfranchised by the nation's voting system's failures. Remedies should include national standards for enforcement of the Motor Voter Act, extended voting hours and a common ballot format and voting technology nationwide for federal elections, according to Norman Hill, president of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, an AFL-CIO constituency group that conducts nonpartisan voter registration drives nationwide.

• **Ensuring immigrant workers' rights.** The unions of the AFL-CIO will continue to push for adoption of the principles approved by the AFL-CIO Executive Council in a February 2000 resolution supporting immigrant Americans. The resolution backs a nationwide policy that would give amnesty to immigrants who make significant contributions to their communities and workplaces, reduce undocumented immigration and prevent abuse by unscrupulous employers who use the current immigration process to retaliate against workers who seek to join unions or improve working conditions.

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney says "we approach 2001 with a great deal of momentum."

"The *Respect Work, Strengthen Family* initiative will enable the union movement to build on the momentum of the elections and inoculate against the attacks we'll get by putting forward a positive agenda at the start of this year." @

Family and work: For Leza Collins de la Cruz, a member of Communications Workers of America Local 2108, her husband José and son Arren, work and family issues are critically linked.





Thousands of  
oil rig operators,  
mariners and other  
Gulf Coast workers  
are seeking ways to  
win a voice at work

# ORGANIZING OFFSHORE

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

**B**efore that tank of gasoline is pumped into your car, powering your ride to the grocery store, the day care center and your workplace, it may have started out as crude petroleum in the Gulf of Mexico off the southern Louisiana coast. Workers on oil rigs, sometimes hundreds of miles out at sea, extract the crude. And workers like crane operator Anthony Ransonet work for the J. Ray McDermott Offshore Platform Fabrication Yard building those oil rigs.

Last year, Ransonet joined his co-workers in seeking a voice at work at the company. "We wanted a voice, because when work got good, they would pay us more," he says, "but when things got bad, they would cut our pay"—while still giving top managers bonuses. On Aug. 10, the majority of the 830 workers at the company voted to join Operating Engineers Local 406. The workers won their first pact in November, a five-and-a-half year contract that set a 3.3 percent wage increase for January and a 2.75 percent increase each following year. The victory at McDermott is part of a larger

effort among Gulf Coast workers to improve their lives and communities. So are recent organizing victories among workers joining Office and Professional Employees at helicopter companies Petroleum Helicopter Inc. in Metairie, La., and Air Logistics in New Iberia, La., where workers in 1999 won a contract with substantial wage increases. And two years ago, workers formed the Gulf Coast Mariners Association in Houma, La. The association attracted more than 1,000 mariners and their families, who rallied at the port, mobilized to help re-elect a pro-union state legislator, made their voices heard at U.S. Coast Guard meetings, formed a mutual aid committee to resolve work-related problems and provided access to such benefits as dental services and prescription discounts. Workers realized it would take coming together into unions to solve the problems they faced with low wages (in Louisiana, as in other states, union members earn nearly 33 percent more than nonunion workers), inadequate pensions and benefits and safety.

Workers decided to form Offshore Mariners United, a federation of the Marine Engineers; Seafarers International Union; International Organization of Masters, Mates

& Pilots; National Maritime Union; and American Maritime Officers. Today, the group has undertaken organizing campaigns at several crew boat and supply vessel companies that employ about 15,000 workers. "When we started GCMA, we were very successful in working with the Coast Guard on rules and regulations," that improved mariners' lives, says Seafarers President Mike Sacco. "But their issues went a lot further, to working conditions, pensions, health benefits, time with their families. Those issues required a bargaining agreement. After conducting a survey, we found



**Victory:** The newest members of Operating Engineers Local 406 show the way to a voice at work for Gulf workers.



that 70 percent of the mariners wanted an organization to fight for those things.” The companies are the lifelines of the offshore oil industry, ferrying the workers, food and all materials needed between the rigs and the shore.

Capt. David McCullough worked at one of those companies, Trico Marine Operators. As a younger man, he says, he grew tired of dead-end jobs in Jacksonville, Fla., where he met some mariners who encouraged him to try out life on the



RON MILEWSKI

OFFSHORE MARINERS UNITED

g support: Union members in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, d in solidarity with fired U.S. Gulf Coast workers; President Mike Sacco (inset) backs the workers' fight voice at work.

sea. McCullough—“Goober” to his friends—came to the Gulf region to get experience. He gained skills and earned progressively more responsible licenses, eventually becoming a captain. “I fell in love with the salt water,” he says. “The water is a way of life.” But recently, McCullough began experiencing workplace storminess. More than once, McCullough and other captains were pressured to sail in fog or on churning, 12-foot-high seas. “Captains were thinking to themselves, ‘If I turn this boat around, my kids are going to starve,’” he says. Then there were the long hours, with crews working as long as 16 hours (12 hours is the limit set by the Coast Guard). Sleep is a precious commodity on crew boats, so it especially was galling when management officials boarded the ship *Firehole River* last August to rouse McCullough from slumber and question him about whether he supported the union. The next day, he says, managers called him into the office, tried to convince him to change his mind and asked him to identify other union supporters. He was fired. And he wasn’t the only one. Trico has fired four workers for union activity since the campaign began, says OMU Field Director Dave Eckstein.

## Support from around the world

On Sept. 27, Trico mariners in Aberdeen, Scotland; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and Trinidad and Tobago rallied in support of their counterparts in Houma and Houston who are coming together to form unions, calling for an end to intimidation, harassment and firings. “Offshore mariners around the world are standing up and demanding that Trico cease its anti-union campaign in America and immediately reinstate union supporters who have been sacked,” says Norrie McVicar, chairman of the International Transport Workers Offshore Task Force. Outside Trico corporate headquarters in Houston, the Rev. Diana Dale energized rally participants, many brought together by the Harris County Central Labor Council. “It is important for people to see the faith community here saying, ‘These people are of infinite worth.’”

In the North Sea, which divides England and Denmark and laps at the southern shore of Norway, Trico mariners are union members, with better wages, benefits and working conditions than their U.S. counterparts. In Australia, unionized maritime workers in offshore oil work also have a voice in holding their employers accountable for safe working conditions—and for standards covering the entire industry. As more and more Gulf Coast workers organize, one of OMU’s goals is to bring together workers and management to set standards in the industry. When shipping companies follow the same rules—covering work hours, for instance—they will be less vulnerable to the dictates of the oil companies and the industry will work better for everyone. “The ultimate culprits are the oil companies,” says Eckstein. “They set the rates they will pay the boats. And when oil prices went up, the rates didn’t.”

## Backing from the community

In their campaign to deny mariners a voice on the job, boat companies have expanded beyond firings and harassment to intimidation of workers. One has set up a “community” group to oppose unionization. (Some quick investigative work by OMU leaders uncovered evidence that one such group, Concerned Citizens for the Community, was chartered almost entirely by officials of one large employer, Edison Chouest Offshore. Jay Cole, a notorious union-buster involved in squashing an organizing effort at a Mercedes-Benz plant in Alabama, aided the group.)

But it’s the workers who have the true support of the community, which augments the house calls and port visits by activists to

educate their co-workers about the union.

“A lot of community members have been horrified by the employers’ vicious campaign,” says Beth Butler, lead organizer at Louisiana ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now). When NAACP President Julian Bond was in town for the annual meeting of the civil rights group’s local chapter, he signed the workers’ right to organize petition and praised the campaign. “The NAACP has long supported the right of working women and men to join unions to do better for themselves and their families,” he said to enthusiastic applause.

“The employers have been very aggressive in creating an environment of intimidation,” says William Quigley, a professor at the Loyola University School of Law. “The community’s role is to support the workers,” he says. “People should have the right to make up their minds.” ☐

## Workers’ Rights Board Supports Trico Workers

After the Gulf Coast Workers’ Justice Board met with workers and Trico, board members called on Trico to reconsider its actions in firing two workers who publicly support the organizing efforts of Offshore Mariners United. The board—made up of clergy, professors, lawyers, retired workers and elected officials from all five Gulf Coast states—also demanded that Trico and other boat companies “allow workers more opportunities to get information and to consider information about their right to organize without fear of retaliation.”

The Gulf Coast board is just one example of workers’ rights boards in communities nationwide that lend strategic support to workers fighting for justice, and apply moral and political persuasion aimed at changing employers’ unfair attempts to deny workers a voice on the job.

At the November hearing in New Orleans, two workers fired from Trico testified about the company’s antiunion lectures at captive-audience meetings onboard vessels, the seizure of union literature and threats and intimidation directed at workers who met with union organizers.

The board’s report “is a sign that the communities of the Gulf Coast won’t stand silently by while companies like Trico abuse the civil rights of workers,” says OMU’s Eckstein. “We hope these findings will encourage the boat companies to allow workers their rights.” ☐



*Workers at Quadrtech Corp., a jewelry manufacturer in Gardena, Calif., outside Los Angeles, won a first-of-its kind victory Nov. 21 when U.S. District Judge Carlos Moreno, citing the company's efforts to deny its workers' right to join a union, issued an injunction stopping the company from moving its operations to Tijuana, Mexico.*

Moreno also ordered Quadrtech to return two truckloads of equipment that already had been shipped to the Tijuana location. On Dec. 11, the day a National Labor Relations Board hearing on the charges was to begin, the company settled with the workers, agreeing to negotiate in good faith for a contract.

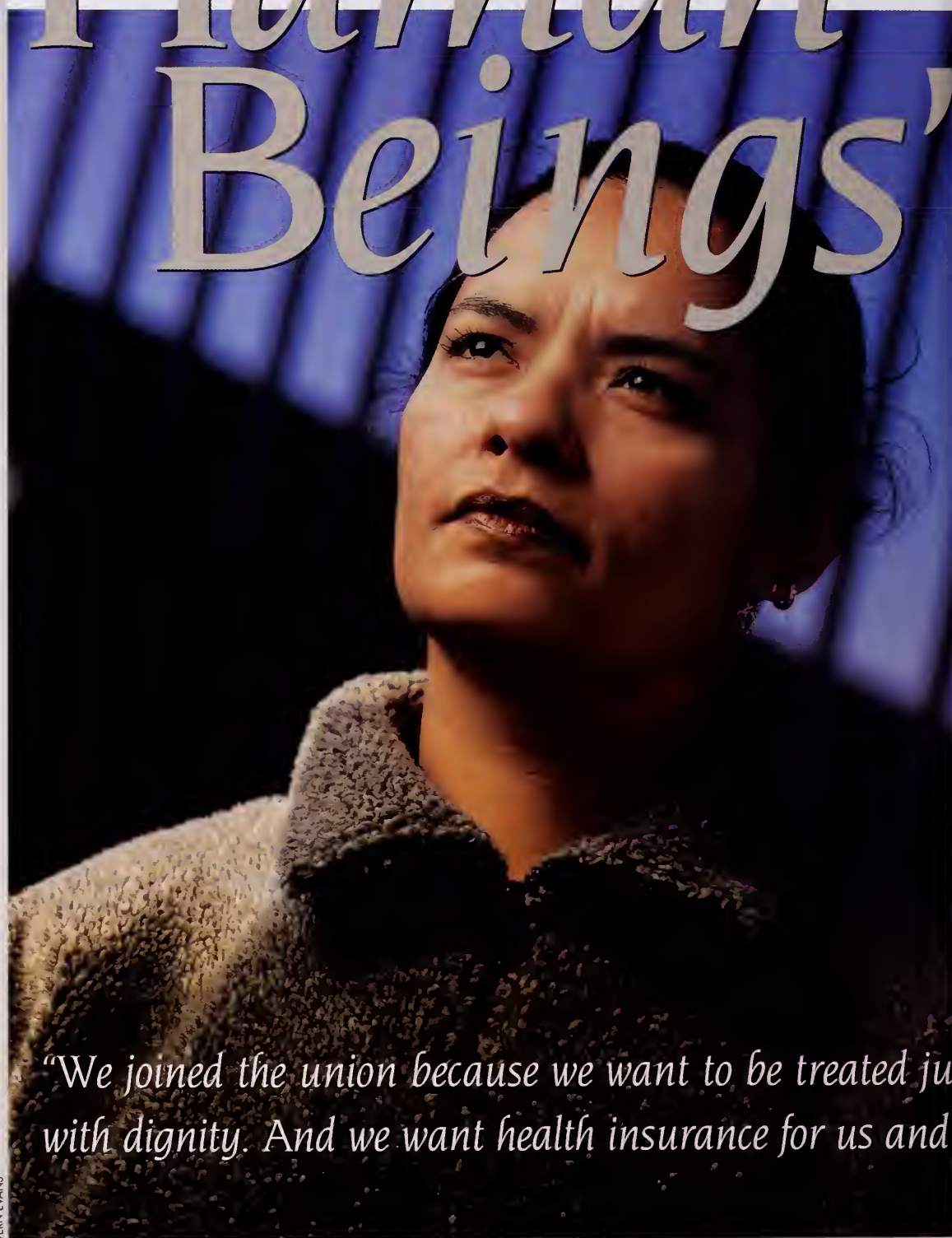
So far, no contract talks have taken place and workers still have about 30 pending unfair labor practice complaints against the company.

The 118 mostly Latina women voted overwhelmingly June 29 for representation with IUE, now IUE-CWA. The workers sought the union because they worked in unventilated spaces without air conditioning in the summer or heat in the winter. They were required to stand for hours with their necks bent, placing tiny stones onto pieces of jewelry. As a result, many workers now are suffering from neck, back, leg and foot injuries.

The day after the vote certification, Quadrtech owner Vladimir Reil announced he would lay off 80 workers and move their work to Mexico, prompting the workers and IUE to file unfair labor practice charges with the NLRB.

Before the vote, the company locked out workers for two-and-a-half days, hired anti-union consultants who told workers they would lose benefits if they unionized, threatened workers with discharge and loss of benefits if they voted for the union, claimed the company would not be able to compete if it had to pay higher wages and

# 'We Gained Respect as Human Beings'



*"We joined the union because we want to be treated just with dignity. And we want health insurance for us and*

VERN EVANS



ulated a letter stating there would be no retaliation against union supporters if the union lost. One of the most outspoken advocates for a better life at work was Rosa Maria Ramirez, a 38-year-old Mexican immigrant who has worked the night shift at Quadrtech for one year. Ramirez tells how she and other workers at Quadrtech struggled to join a union—and Ramirez and Cornell University Professor Lance Compa describe how the efforts of Quadrtech workers resulted in the nation's first legal ruling requiring a company to recognize a union instead of moving its operations across the border. @

—James B. Parks

## Rosa Maria Ramirez

stopped the company from moving because we were united," says Ramirez. "We were being treated badly by the supervisors. They never treated us like human beings. They abused us. They did what they pleased with us. They have a video camera to keep looking at us. Everything happened because one of our workers had medical problems with her feet and legs and she asked for a chair to sit down while she worked. They told her 'No' and took all the chairs from everybody and we had to stand in place for 10 hours every day. And they fired us. That's when we came together. After we voted for the union, the supervisors reduced our production quotas and now they're making us harder to make our goals. I know they're just trying to depress us and make us quit, but we won't. We have the strength that comes from the union. We have a lot of assistance from lots of people we didn't know before. They would like for us to leave, but we are determined and we want our dignity. We joined the union because we want to be treated justly. We want good wages with dignity. And we want health insurance for us and our families. With the union I feel more productive and happy because I have help when something goes wrong. If we hadn't had the union, we wouldn't be working here now. We gained respect as human beings." @

Interview by James B. Parks

want good wages  
and families."

## Lance Compa

### The Quadrtech Case: A Victory to Build On

Stay put and negotiate with your union, a courageous federal judge told California-based Quadrtech Corp. For labor rights advocates, the Quadrtech decision is worth celebrating. It shows that strong labor law enforcement by a resolute National Labor Relations Board and fair-minded courts can protect workers' basic right of association. And if any workers needed their rights protected, Quadrtech workers did. They turned to self-organization after enduring years of minimum wages, no benefits, job speed-up and 12-hour days without even a place for many of them to sit.

The judge rejected Quadrtech's cynical claim that competition from low-wage workers in China motivated the move to Mexico. "The rhetoric of 'cheap foreign labor' is a shibboleth that employers may not rely upon to justify unlawful, anti-union conduct," the judge declared. That sentence ought to be posted in big letters on every workplace bulletin board in the land—and in federal courthouses, too.

The decision did not create new legal precedent. It already was unlawful to shut a workplace in retaliation for workers' successful organizing. But now this principle has been applied to a cross-border runaway shop, not just to a move within the United States.

Showing determination and unity in the face of plant-closing threats, company spying and supervisor pressure, Quadrtech workers wrote a new chapter in U.S. labor organizing history. First they voted overwhelmingly for their union. Then they showed how to use effective labor law enforcement to bring management to the bargaining table instead of helplessly watching their jobs get moved. They sent a sharp warning to companies out to break worker organizing drives by moving overseas. Big Business can't just cry "cheap foreign labor" and find a safe haven abroad when its real intention is to punish U.S. workers for exercising freedom of association.

The challenge now is to make sure the Quadrtech decision is not a one-shot deal for workers' rights. Swift, sure enforcement of workers' rights should be the rule, not



COURTESY LANCE COMPA

the exception, in U.S. labor law and practice. The NLRB should seek more injunctions to stop workers' rights violations, and federal courts should grant more injunctions like the one in Quadrtech.

Employers screamed bloody murder when the NLRB's general counsel sought 90 to 100 injunction remedies per year in the late 1990s, compared with 40 to 50 in earlier years. But 50 or 100 injunctions each year only scratch the surface of employer lawbreaking.

Taking a cue from the Quadrtech case, labor law authorities should move more forcefully and more often for injunctions to halt employer unfair labor practices. The NLRB should seek injunctions not only to stop unlawful closures, but also to quickly reinstate workers fired for organizing and to stop bad-faith "surface bargaining" by employers who want to punish workers by denying them a contract.

But a long-term solution cannot rest with case-by-case injunctions or settlements. Far-reaching labor law reform is needed to address problems of plant closings and runaway shops. These problems will persist as long as companies enjoy uncontrolled capital mobility in a global market economy. For help beyond the Quadrtech case, workers and their allies have to elect a Congress and an administration willing to challenge corporate privileges and to strongly enforce workers' fundamental rights of association, organizing and bargaining. @

—Lance Compa

Lance Compa teaches labor law and international labor rights at Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations in Ithaca, N.Y.



# MAKING THE

THROUGH A TWO-YEAR STRATEGIC  
EFFORT TO RECAPTURE THE STATE  
LEGISLATURE FOR WORKING FAMILIES,  
COLORADO UNION MEMBERS BLOCKED  
NEAR-CERTAIN PASSAGE OF 'RIGHT TO  
WORK FOR LESS' LEGISLATION

By JANE BIRNBAUM

When the Colorado Democratic gubernatorial candidate lost by 5,500 votes in 1998, the governor's mansion joined Republican majorities in the state house and senate. Suddenly, Colorado was poised to become a "right to work" state—bad news for union members because workers in so-called right to work states can choose to receive the benefits of union-negotiated contracts without being members. Right to work laws are a recipe for weaker unions—and lower average wages for workers, according to the Economic Policy Institute. And all because 5,500 votes got away.

"We realized," recalls Colorado AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Ellen Golombek, "that with members' votes alone, we could have won."

The recognition that working families lost the governor's race by so few votes sowed the seeds of what union activists are calling the Colorado Miracle. While Colorado voted for George W. Bush by 8 percentage points over Vice President Al Gore, a member-to-member campaign created by leaders of the state federation and the Denver Area Labor Federation, the Northern Colorado Central Labor Council and the Western Colorado Trades and Labor Assembly produced seven wins in 10 targeted state senatorial districts. That gave Colorado's senate a Democratic majority for the first time in 40 years, preventing almost-certain passage of right to work legislation in the coming years.

The enormous success never would have happened without rank-and-file support, according to Colorado AFL-CIO President Bob Greene. "The biggest accomplishment is the response we received, not only from our affiliates, but from membership as a whole," he says. "This is a New Alliance—

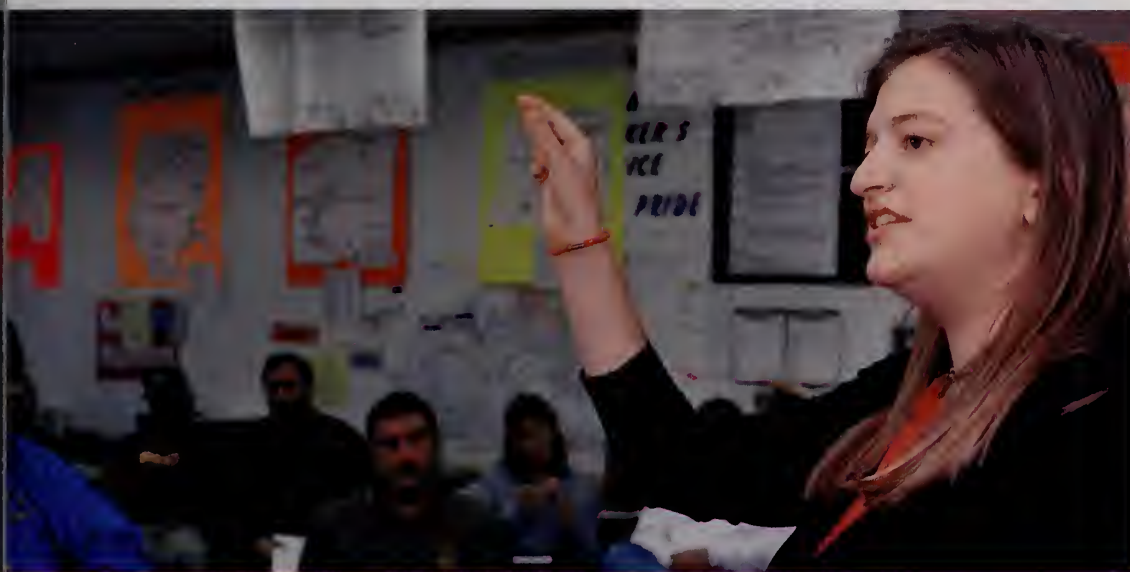


**Celebration:** More than 800 members and leaders, including Denver Area Labor Federation President Leslie Moody (top right) and Colorado AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Ellen Golombek (bottom right) rallied Jan. 10 at the state capitol in Denver. Workers celebrated their November election victories and launched the first of more than two dozen lobby days.





# COLORADO MIRACLE



In message: Denver Area Labor Federation Political Director Carmen Rhodes trains Labor 2000 volunteers last fall.

clear strategy, clear roles—in which everyone can win.”

“This was one of the most educational and inspirational things I have done in the union movement,” says David Ottesen, a Seattle-based organizer and representative at the Painters and Allied Trades. During the campaign, Ottesen served as a state senate district coordinator in Colorado. “This small group of dedicated people from across the spectrum, not just the building trades but from traditionally lower-paying union jobs, dedicated themselves to the task of saving thousands of Coloradans from a future of low-wage jobs under RTW,” he says. “I consider them a small band of heroes.”

The leaders of this small band of heroes—Golombek, Leslie Moody, the president of the Denver Area Labor Federation, and Carmen Rhodes, the labor council’s political director—put into play cutting-edge union concepts for the 21st century. By linking local political action, organizing and coalition-building, the labor council has

transformed Denver into a newly focused and energized Union City (see box, p. 20). Having defined new cooperative roles for the state federation and its labor councils, the campaign exemplifies the goals of the New Alliance, the AFL-CIO Executive Council’s road map for restructuring the union movement. And in training hundreds of new political activists, the Colorado Miracle has brought to life the union movement’s goal of building successful, ongoing campaign structures.

## Starting early and sharing responsibilities

Union leaders started strategizing for the 2000 election immediately after GOP Gov. Bill Owens’ victory. They divided duties, with Golombek taking charge of mail, message, fund-raising and media, and Moody and Rhodes coordinating the field operation, including phone banks and the critical recruitment and training of district coordinators and volunteers. “In the past, the state

federation never delegated because most CLCs had no staff, and those that did seldom worked with us,” says Golombek. “This time, we mutually agreed to share responsibilities, which is why it worked.”

Together, the three picked 10 districts with the highest member density and the most chance to elect Democrats. “Then, with 49 percent to 69 percent of members registered to vote in those districts, we decided on a goal of reaching 80 percent registration,” says Moody.

While successfully piloting get-out-the-vote techniques during Denver municipal races in spring 1999, the labor councils also launched a statewide voter registration drive. In addition to registering members at their worksites, union leaders created a unique door piece for members’ homes with a registration card and two applications for voting by mail, popular in the state. Ultimately, the drive yielded 7,200 new voters in the 10 key districts—and in state Senate District 19, where the Democratic candidate won by only 897 votes, the unions had registered 605 members.

Representatives of key larger unions and smaller activist unions first heard details about the state senate campaign at a labor council strategic planning meeting in August 1999. The response was good. By early 2000, Golombek was “selling” the plan to affiliates. “Some were concerned about potentially wasting resources,” she says. “But I had trust in Moody and Rhodes, and the affiliates trusted me, so the affiliates believed me. For some, it was a giant leap of faith, and they took it.”

Will Ferrara, political director for the Rocky Mountain Regional Council of Carpenters, persuaded his leaders to lend their Denver meeting hall for Labor 2000 field headquarters and to pick up costs, including



# IS YOUR COMMUNITY A UNION CITY?

Four years ago, the AFL-CIO launched the Union Cities program to revitalize the union movement at the grassroots level—the central labor councils. Since then, 162 councils nationwide have signed on, pledging to take eight steps to become a Union City—including making support for organizing the first priority, mobilizing rapidly against employers who fight workers' efforts to join unions, building community coalitions and political power and increasing union leadership diversity.

By taking these steps, CLCs, national unions and local unions across the nation are joining together as they have in Colorado, to turn their communities into Union Cities that help create a powerful new voice speaking for working families from county courthouses to the White House.

"Our Union Cities strategy means more—more communities stepping up to the plate, more members running for office, more members working with our allies in their communities and more organizing wins. It's a strategy that works," says Thomas Buffenbarger, Machinists president and chair of the AFL-CIO Executive Council Committee on State and Local Central Bodies.

This year, the AFL-CIO biennial convention in October will feature the work of Union Cities CLCs. A nomination process for CLCs to be recognized now is under way. Visit [www.aflcio.org/unioncity](http://www.aflcio.org/unioncity) to nominate your community to be a Union City. ☐

it, according to Ottesen: "Right to work was the one thing we had going for us that resonated with 99 percent of members. Even the Republican members and independents who would not support Gore would vote with us on right to work."

And learning to stay on message gave the activists organizing skills they'll have forever. "Talking about issues, explaining why they were doing what they were, taught everyone to communicate with other members and potential members," observes Ron Thorp, a coordinator and business agent for Plumbers and Pipe Fitters Local 208.

While campaigners worked to stay on message and sometimes awoke at night panicked over how to recruit enough volunteers, according to Colorado Building and Construction

Trades Council office manager and political coordinator Candie McKeon, Moody and Rhodes kept their spirits up by providing detailed schedules and holding twice-weekly accountability meetings.

"There was a lot of competition to do well," McKeon, a district coordinator, remembers. "And I'd never seen anything like that much scheduling before. It inspired confidence, which was important, because in the past in Colorado, union members have worked on campaigns but there was nothing concrete. We'd lost confidence in unions getting something done politically."

Mario Jaurigue, a 29-year-old district coordinator and two-year member of IUPAT Local 419, hadn't voted since he registered to vote as a teenager. "I'm an Independent, but most candidates I pick are Democrats, who usually don't have a chance here in this conservative state," the Colorado native explains. "I was a pretty disenfranchised voter."

But Jaurigue got fired up when he went door-to-door speaking with members. "In my district, the Republican candidate had stopped in at these neighborhoods two days prior, and everyone said how nice she was. I said, 'Let me tell you about that nice lady and how she's probably going to vote for right to work.' They got pretty perturbed, even angry, when I explained right to work and what it would mean for them."

In November, Jaurigue voted. And he plans to continue voting: "If you focus on the politics, you understand how important it is to educate members about our issues." ☐



**IAM President Buffenbarger**

JIM LEVITT/IMPACT VISUALS

**Workin' it:** IUPAT Local 419 member Mario Jaurigue volunteered in Labor 2000 and says he's no longer a "disenfranchised voter."



\$2,500 for phones. "First, I pointed out that every time a politician came by, they'd see Carpenters' signs everywhere, and this was our chance to get a front seat in government affairs," says Ferrara. "And because the council includes Wyoming and Utah—right to work states—they understood that if right to work passed in Colorado, we'd lose a big chunk of membership and that would cut our funding down."

With 31 affiliates eventually agreeing to the paid release of 44 full-time and 74 part-time staff and rank-and-file members, who served in pairs as district coordinators, campaign leaders turned for advice to the Labor Council of South Bay in San Jose, Calif. "We went there because they have a really well-respected political program, with a similar-size staff for politics, and they've been winning," Rhodes recalls.

## Training volunteers and staying on message

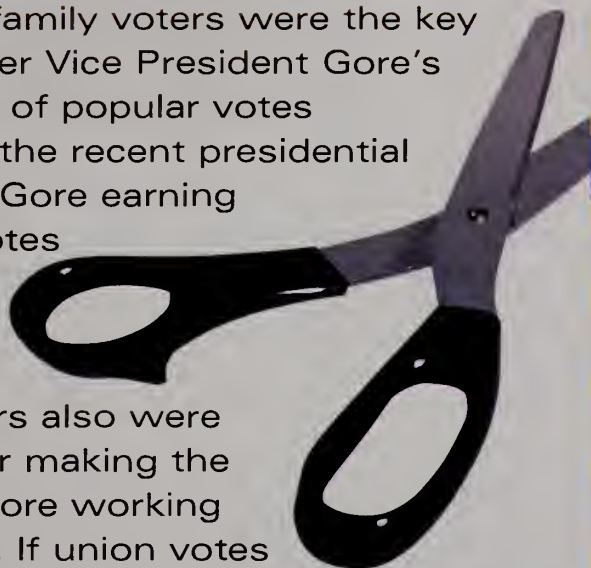
Rhodes and Moody realized it was critical to educate coordinators and volunteers, who ultimately numbered about 1,300, about right to work and staying on message, avoiding partisan politics and other distracting issues when they spoke with members. The training included role-playing that many campaigners who had never knocked on doors before "hated at first," Rhodes says. But it was worth

CHRIS TAKAJI/IMPACT VISUALS



## Union Voters Make the Difference

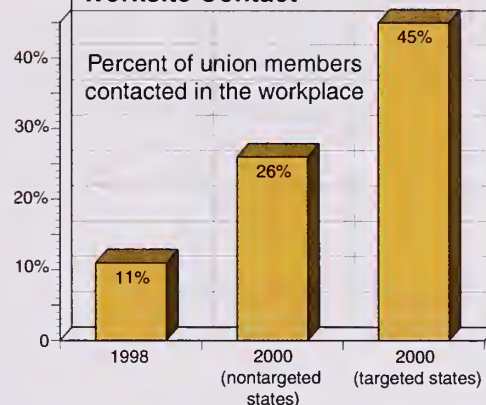
**W**orking family voters were the key to former Vice President Gore's capture of popular votes nationwide in the recent presidential election, with Gore earning 50,996,116 votes to President Bush's 50,456,169. Union members also were responsible for making the U.S. Senate more working family-friendly. If union votes were subtracted from the overall vote for Senate candidates, Big Business candidates would control the Senate 61-39 instead of today's 50-50 split.



## Getting Out the Message

A key goal of Labor 2000 was ensuring the AFL-CIO's more than 13 million members were contacted by their unions and informed about candidates' positions on working family issues. In an election night survey of 800 union members after the elections, 93 percent of union members reported they were contacted by their unions. In states in which the candidates were running neck and neck—"battleground" states—96 percent say they heard from their unions. Election results from 1998 and 1996 show the most effective communication among union members is through workplace contact by other union members—and those contacts jumped dramatically in 2000.

**Worksite Contact**

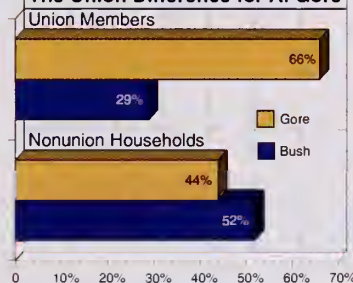


Source: Peter D. Hart Research Associates and Lake, Snell, Perry & Associates

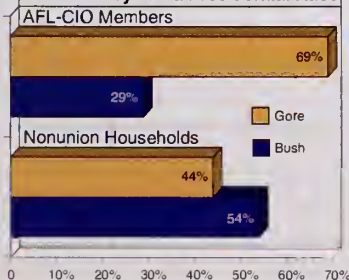
## The Union Difference in the Presidential Race

Overall, union members supported Gore by 66 percent to 29 percent, while nonunion households backed Bush by 52 percent to 44 percent. In such battleground states as Michigan and Pennsylvania, working families were responsible for Gore's winning those states' electoral votes.

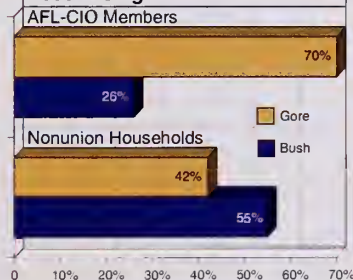
**The Union Difference for Al Gore**



**2000 Pennsylvania Presidential Race**



**2000 Michigan Presidential Race**

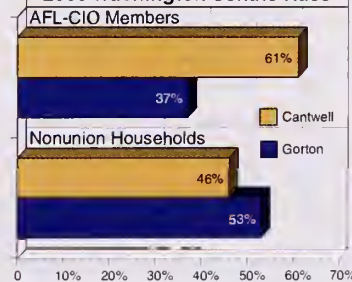


Source: Lake, Snell, Perry & Associates and Voter News Service

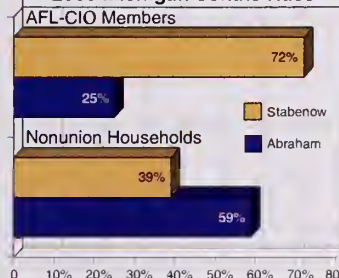
## The Union Difference in the Senate

Union household voters made the critical difference in electing working family candidates to the Senate, especially in close contests in Michigan, where Debbie Stabenow defeated incumbent Sen. Spencer Abraham (R); Missouri, with the late Gov. Mel Carnahan beating incumbent Sen. John Ashcroft (R); and Washington State, where Maria Cantwell ousted incumbent Sen. Slade Gorton (R).

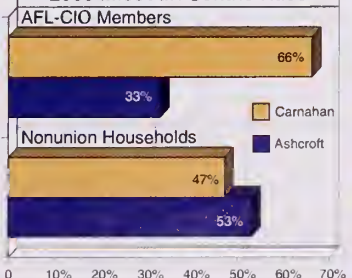
**2000 Washington Senate Race**



**2000 Michigan Senate Race**



**2000 Missouri Senate Race**



Source: Lake, Snell, Perry & Associates and Voter News Service





**Making history: Union collectibles from recent political conventions are part of the Smithsonian collection in Washington, D.C.**

## Hats Off to History

**M**any union activists know they quietly make history every day by struggling on behalf of working families. And some even get the chance to contribute to the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.

Last year, while at the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, Kim Fellingner, associate legislative director for the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association/AFSCME Local 11, was surprised when a curator for the museum asked whether she would contribute her whimsical hat to the collection. The hat, festooned with Ohio flags and a mini-lighthouse, caught the eye of curator Harry Rubenstein, who was also on the lookout for union memorabilia. He convinced Fellingner to mail the hat and her AFSCME "clapper," a pair of green plastic hands that create a joyful noise showing delegates'

## Yale: No Class

**S**ome unscrupulous employers battle workers' rights by locking out workers during strikes. But at Yale University, a prominent professor is locking out graduate teaching assistants from a popular class because of union organizing activity at the Ivy League campus.

Historian Paul Kennedy says he will not teach his class on the strategy and diplomacy of the great powers since 1860 if any of the teaching assistants helping with the course are members of the Graduate Employees and Students Organization, which has been waging a decade-long struggle to unionize.

In a series of e-mails to colleagues, Kennedy—who, like many professors, depends upon graduate student employee

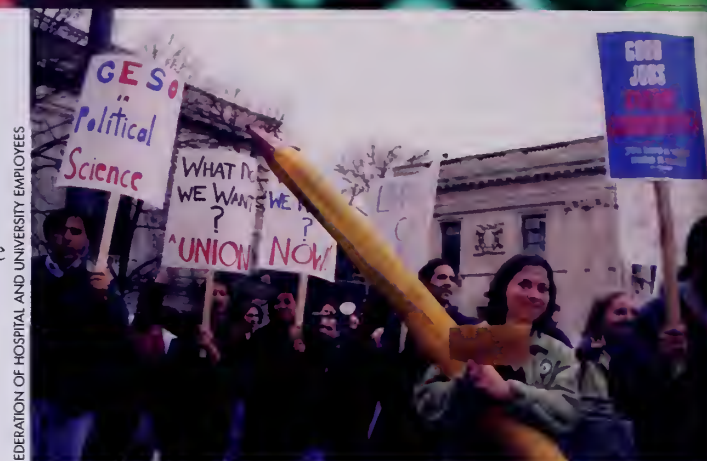
enthusiasm for political candidates who stand up for working families.

Other living history items Smithsonian curators collected include the vivid yellow and black T-shirts sported by Fire Fighters members, signs carried by United Food and Commercial Workers proclaiming, "The Only Way to Go, Vote Al and Joe" and vests and buttons. While not on display yet, the treasures now are part of the Smithsonian's research endeavors.

"These items represent activists' participation in the electoral process," says Rubenstein, who invites other union members who were convention delegates to send items to him at the National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C. 20560-0613. ☐

research to help produce his history tomes—says he doesn't want any of the undergraduates in his class to be inconvenienced by a "grade strike," in which student employees on strike refuse to grade papers.

Kennedy went so far as to float a "ballon d'essai" (trial balloon), suggesting that as a result of unionization, Yale eventually may "move to a position where no T.A.s are required at all." There doesn't seem to be much danger of that, since Yale and many universities increasingly are relying on graduate teaching assistants and other part-time faculty—with few benefits and little job security—to teach classes and grade papers. A recent GESO study showed that over the past 30



years, the number of Yale graduate student teachers has skyrocketed, while tenure-track faculty numbers have stayed steady.

GESO has filed an unfair labor practice complaint with the National Labor Relations Board, but leaders don't put the blame exclusively on Kennedy. Wendi Walsh, GESO lead organizer, notes the administration at Yale—which boasts a motto of *lux et veritas* (light and truth)—consistently has encouraged faculty to oppose graduate student employees' efforts to get a voice at work. "It's up to the administration to create an atmosphere of neutrality on campus," she says. ☐

## White-Collar Crime?

**I**n opposing Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 814's efforts to organize employees at the posh Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel in California, hotel management missed its mark when it went after local clergy.

Nearly one dozen clergy of various faiths have been meeting after work with employees at Loews to discuss the workers' practical and ethical concerns about the union struggle. In response, hotel managers issued a memo warning workers, who currently earn approximately \$9 an hour, of possible visits from a union spokesman "dressed as a priest...to gain entry into people's homes." The hysterical

memo also charged the local Catholic Church with acting as a "political tool of the union." Outraged religious leaders of many faiths wrote protest letters to hotel managers after they learned of the memo.

"Your behavior demonstrates exactly why workers do not trust management at your hotel," wrote Methodist minister and former Santa Monica Mayor James Conn. After the protests, hotel management apologized to the union and workers. Kurt Petersen, Local 814 organizing director, says, "The managers can attack the union, but when they attack the workers' church, it only makes them more determined to see this fight through." ☐



## PUBLICATIONS



**Out at Work: Building a Gay-Labor Alliance**, edited by Kitty Krupat and Patrick McCreery, with an introduction by the editors and an afterword by Lisa Dugan, is a collection of essays, including one by AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, that brings union and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) activists together with cultural analysts to consider

an effective gay-labor collaboration. Krupat, a longtime union activist, and McCreery, a gay activist, met as New York University graduate students when they took part in forming a UAW-affiliated union in 1997. "LGBT workers cut across all these lines," they write. "They are out there, unorganized, in the millions." \$49.95 cloth, \$19.95 paperback. University of Minnesota Press, [www.upress.umn.edu](http://www.upress.umn.edu).



**Women Behind the Labels: Worker Testimonies from Central America**, with interviews by Marion Traub-Werner and edited by Lynda Yanz and Traub-Werner, is a collection of eight interviews with women leaders organizing for justice in the apparel and

banana industries in Guatemala and Honduras. The fruit of a project launched by STITCH, a network of U.S. women activists and organizers supporting Central American female organizers, these short and accessible interviews cover a broad range of topics, including working conditions, family relationships, personal histories and the emotional decision to organize. These are "the women behind the clothing labels and food brands that have inspired campaigns against sweatshops across North America," says the introduction to this booklet, which is intended as an educational tool for activists, teachers, union educators and others. \$5. Available from STITCH, 4933 S. Dorchester, Chicago, Ill. 60615; e-mail: [h52@aol.com](mailto:h52@aol.com); phone: 773-924-2738.

**The Underbelly of the U.S. Economy: Joblessness and the Pauperization of Work in America**, by David Dembo and Ward Morehouse of the Council on International and Public Affairs, is the authors' annually updated special report to the National Jobs for All Coalition. Despite the longest period of economic expansion in the past half-century, millions of Americans still are confronted with economic hardship and joblessness—and poverty and income inequality are far greater than official U.S. government figures show, the report concludes. "This study provides additional ammunition for the decent-jobs-for-all campaigns now under way," says Gertrude Schaffner Goldberg, chair of the National Coalition. \$5 plus \$2 for shipping from the CIPA, P.O. Box 337, Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y. 10520; phone and fax: 800-316-2739; website: [www.njfac.org](http://www.njfac.org).

## CATALOG

**Books for Union Leaders, Union Activists, Union Members**, published by the Union Communication Services, updates and expands the UCS catalog of union-friendly books, which are categorized under: Tools for Union Leaders and Activists, Resources for Negotiators, Popular Reading and Cartoons, Understanding Economics and History and Biographies. For a copy of the 32-page catalog, write to UCS Books, 165

Conduit St., Annapolis, Md. 21401-2512, or visit the website: [www.unionist.com](http://www.unionist.com).

## WEBSIGHTINGS

[www.poultry-pastoral.org](http://www.poultry-pastoral.org)—You may decline that next helping of chicken after reading "Voices and Choices," a pastoral letter from the Catholic Bishops of the South. Based on interviews with poultry processing workers and chicken growers, the letter includes devastating photographs of workers and wrenching photos of the product they process under inhumane working conditions. The letter also explores the economics of the poultry industry, including how factory farming "impacts prices, wages, natural resources and the future of family farming, placing enormous power in the boardrooms of a few companies."

[www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org)—

If you're fired up after reading the bishops' letter on worker exploitation in the poultry industry, you might want to check out Network, a Washington, D.C.-based Catholic social justice lobby that educates and organizes to influence the formation of federal legislation. Catholic social teaching and the life experience of low-income people are lenses for viewing social reality, according to the site.



COURTESY JAMES WILLIAMS

## EXHIBIT

**Steeltown**, a multimedia exhibit by artist James Williams, at The American Labor Museum/Botto House National Landmark through April 22, features three 8-foot-by-12-foot multimedia murals. In a dozen assorted digital images created from inkjet printed on canvas, the artist contrasts workers and family members in color against black and white photos of steel mills. The exhibit also features video interviews with steelworkers in Mexico, New York and Ontario, Canada. Williams says his art reflects his childhood in an industrial city and years of working in the steel mills, and he hopes his exhibit depicts the "plight of an endangered industry." Botto House, in Haledon, N.J., outside New York City, offers tours for large groups, 973-595-7953.



Four Weeks  
for Justice

# UNION SUMMER

**E**ach year, the AFL-CIO Union Summer program brings together hundreds of workers, students and community activists into the streets and neighborhoods for a four-week educational internship to participate and develop skills for union organizing drives and other campaigns for workers' rights and social justice.

Help spread the word to union members, their children and community allies that by taking part in Union Summer, they can:

- Help workers fight for justice in their workplace;
- Organize picket lines and participate in marches and demonstrations;
- Help build coalitions between unions and community organizations;
- Rally support on important workers' rights issues; and

*Make a  
Difference!*

## Seminary Summer



*"It's not just about praying and preaching. It's about making the commitment to do what needs to be done and having faith that, no matter how hard it gets, right will prevail."*

—Brenita Mitchell,  
2000 Seminary Summer participant

**M**ake sure you also get the word out about Seminary Summer, a 10-week joint project of the AFL-CIO and the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, open to seminarians, novices, rabbinical students and other future religious leaders.

Interns receive a \$210 weekly stipend, housing and a mentor for theological reflection throughout the summer. For more information, contact the NICWJ at 773-728-8400; e-mail: [seminarysummer@nicwj.org](mailto:seminarysummer@nicwj.org); website: [www.nicwj.org](http://www.nicwj.org).

Union Summer and Seminary Summer sites are developed and announced in the spring. Interns receive a stipend of \$210 per week and housing is provided. If your local is interested in hosting a site, please contact Nancy Harvin at 202-639-6228.

For more information, call 800-952-2550 (202-639-6220 in Washington, D.C.); e-mail: [unionsummer@aflcio.org](mailto:unionsummer@aflcio.org); and visit the website: [www.aflcio.org/unionsummer](http://www.aflcio.org/unionsummer).



Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

MARCH 2001

# America @work

## ALSO INSIDE:

**Cyber Drives: Organizing,  
Bargaining and Mobilizing**

**The Prescription Drug Dilemma**

**Securing Immigrant Workers' Rights**



# Organizing for a Union City



## SPEAKING OUT ON THE 2000 ELECTION

**"IT IS MY HOPE** to see the labor movement in the country be what it used to be. I would particularly like to see two things. One, labor unions need to bring young workers into the fold....Secondly, I am gratified to see that unions are beginning to change to a less Anglo, less white, less male focus. While I am an Anglo male, I also recognize that the future of the labor movement lies in representing all the people and making them feel that they have a place at the table. Please [organize] the southern, right to work states and make [southern politicians] change their conservatism."—Chris McKinney, Cleveland

### SAY WHAT?

#### How is your union using e-Tools to organize, bargain and mobilize?

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's Say What? Selected responses will appear in a future issue. America@work, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; phone: 202-637-5010; fax: 202-508-6908; e-mail: atwork@afclcio.org.

### HERE'S WHAT YOU SAY

#### ABOUT HOW YOUR UNION HAS INCREASED ORGANIZING:

"Our local, representing 20,000 members in portions of Indiana, Illinois and Iowa, has a responsibility to educate our members and people in the trade. We use our staff and our members to organize nonunion worksites, and our goal is to organize a jobsite after educating the workers there about the benefits of unions. We have 15 full-time organizers and the lion's share of their work is education. We conduct a COMET (Construction Organizing Membership Education Training) program for new members. We're cocky about organizing—our win ratio is 100 percent because we never give up on a campaign."—Bob Paddock, director of organizing, Operating Engineers Local 150, Countryside, Ill.

**"I READ WITH REAL** interest your article, 'For the Health of Our Children,' in the January 2001 issue...[and] I'm sorry you missed the union action in Cleveland around CHIP [the Children's Health Insurance Program]. Since 1998, unions within the Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor...have been actively involved in Healthy Star [Ohio's CHIP] promotion and enrollment efforts....From the beginning, the unions have worked...with the Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio (UHCAN Ohio)...a statewide grassroots organization committed to comprehensive, affordable and publicly accountable health care."—Athena Godet-Calogeras, UHCAN, Cleveland

**"WE WERE PROUD** of the fact that we, union members and registered voters of Michigan, carried Gore and [Sen.] Debbie Stabenow, who was outspent 4-to-1. Our grassroots activities were a joint effort of the worker-to-worker committee and the CAP [Community Action Program] committee. We held a registration drive with a new registered voter being entered in a raffle for a chance to win a color television. We registered...members who work at the plant [and] family and friends of members [and] had an absentee ballot drive to ensure [all members] could vote. Every vote counts, as we found out in the Florida fiasco!"—Andrew T. Linko, chairperson, CAP committee, UAW Local 387, Flat Rock, Mich.

AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in America@work.



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DAVID BACON



## COMMEMORATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

**W**orking women around the world are commemorating International Women's Day, March 8, highlighting through a series of events the day's theme: "Women's Rights are Everyone's Rights, An Injury to One is an Injury to All."

The AFL-CIO Working Women's Department is launching its 2001 "Ask a Working Woman" survey to determine the top concerns of working women. The third such survey since 1997, it provides a unique platform

believe the women's agenda is a working people's agenda and the survey crystallizes the issues for all of us."

The federation will use the results of the yearlong survey to help determine which issues to highlight in legislative and political action. For more information about the survey, or to get a copy, contact the AFL-CIO Working Women's Department at 202-637-5064.

Also on International Women's Day, women members of the International Transport Workers Federation, including the Flight Attendants, are holding a series of events to highlight their campaign to support basic rights for women workers. The AFA sponsored a resolution in the AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department's recent meetings supporting efforts for equal pay and reaffirming opposition to discrimination and support for internationally recognized labor rights.

"These issues are important to women and the union movement," says AFA President Patricia Friend. "One of the benefits of working to eliminate discrimination against women is that it helps all workers."

In Australia, women transport workers are reaching out to other unions to discuss the importance of women's issues. In Brazil, women unionists are focusing on women's health concerns in exhibits and conferences. Tanzanian women are marching and rallying for labor rights. ☐

for working women to talk about the issues facing them and their families.

That voice is especially important as the union movement plans its agenda in the new Bush administration, says Armeta Dixon, executive vice president of SEIU Local 1199E-DC in Baltimore.

"For many years there was no specific agenda for women," Dixon said. "The survey gives us a focus and helps us narrow our concentration. That's how you win. I



**Working women:** AFA President Patricia Friend and union members, shown here at rally last year, took part in International Women's Day March 8.

## Ergonomics **ALERT!**

**S**purred by their Big Business contributors, anti-worker lawmakers in Congress last month launched what has been called the "nuclear bomb" of deregulation to obliterate the most important new workplace safety rule in years, the recently issued ergonomics standard.

Under the terms of the never-before-used Congressional Review Act, if both the House and Senate vote by a simple majority to overturn the ergonomics standard, OSHA will not be allowed to issue any type of similar rule unless Congress grants it special permission. The Bush administration has yet to commit to stand by these important worker protections.

The drive, led by Sen. Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), is backed by such right-wing associations as the Washington Legal Foundation, which includes on its board of directors many Bush cabinet members, including Attorney General John Ashcroft.

The AFL-CIO and its member unions have mounted a nationwide grassroots mobilization to stop the atomic attack on the ergonomics rule—which could come as early as mid-March. The education and mobilization includes special alerts to union leaders and e-mails and workplace fliers to union members. Call, write or e-mail your senators and representatives and urge them to oppose any legislation to overturn the ergonomics rule. Visit [www.aflcio.org/safety](http://www.aflcio.org/safety). ☐

## Opening U.S. Highways to Mexican Trucks a 'Danger'

**"T**he safety of our citizens must come before diplomatic niceties," Teamsters President James P. Hoffa told a crowded Capitol Hill press conference Feb. 7, the day after the Bush administration said the nation would open its borders to Mexican trucks.

Hoffa was joined by consumer advocates, highway safety groups, insurance industry representatives and a bipartisan group of congressional representatives. All warned that substandard Mexican safety laws, unsafe trucks and a lack of U.S. resources to inspect and monitor the thousands of trucks that could cross the border each day put American drivers and consumers at risk.

Under the terms of the North American Free Trade Agreement, which a NAFTA dispute panel recently upheld, the United States must comply with the ruling or face trade sanctions.

Rep. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) said, "Mexican trucks pose a great danger to our nation's highways and NAFTA could make this threat a reality. Heavy traffic and faulty vehicles are a deadly combination for American motorists."

The consumer watchdog group Public Citizen released a report examining the serious deficiencies of Mexican truck safety laws and the danger the unsafe trucks pose to U.S. motorists. *The Coming NAFTA Crash: The Deadly Impact of a Secret NAFTA Tribunal's Decision to Open U.S. Highways to Unsafe Mexican Trucks* is available at [www.tradewatch.org](http://www.tradewatch.org). ☐



**Wrong way:** IBT President James P. Hoffa, consumer advocates and lawmakers say all Mexican trucks in the United States poses a danger on the nation's highways.



# Council Focuses on Organizing, Taxes and Immigration

## SPOTLIGHT

## Respect Work, Strengthen Family Kicks off Town Halls

Unions nationwide are convening more than two dozen town hall-like meetings to launch the new AFL-CIO effort, *Respect Work, Strengthen Family*. The "Respect Work, Strengthen Family" theme represents the work activists are undertaking across the country for quality, affordable prescription drugs, a Patients' Bill of Rights, raising state and federal minimum wages, advancing the federal ergonomics rule and other key working family issues.

In Berlin, Vt., where the State Labor Council held the first town hall gathering Feb. 4, lawmakers included Gov. Howard Dean—who has put parental leave money in his budget—and Vermont's Republican leader of the House, which may try to eliminate it.

Speakers included Matt Durocher, a Carpenters Local 1996 member and new father of premature twins, Autumn and Annelise. Durocher said he and wife Lisa, a marketing manager, must choose between the girls' needs and losing half their income when the girls come home and Lisa stays with them. "It's unfair to have to make that decision," says Durocher.

The Los Angeles County Federation of Labor used its Feb. 12 town hall meeting to strategize action by the increasingly fruitful coalition between unions, community and faith-based groups. Nearly 700 union and community leaders and members took part, including AFL-CIO President John Sweeney and AFL-CIO Executive Council members in town for the council's winter meeting.

And on Feb. 13, in Raleigh, N.C., more than 100 union members discussed organizing, prescription drug costs, health care and living wages. A report issued in January by the North Carolina Justice and Community Development Center found that one-third of North Carolinians cannot afford a basic standard of living. "With our state legislative agenda, we will make sure that public and elected officials understand that we want respect for workers and strengthened families," says North Carolina State AFL-CIO President James Andrews. ☐

labor, to reject child labor and to work free from discrimination.

Several workers who recently formed unions joined AFL-CIO President John Sweeney during a press conference opening the meeting. "I have more time with my family because I have Saturdays and Sundays off now," said Laura Freeland, a member of Machinists District 190 who, along with co-workers, recently

won card-check recognition at the San Francisco International Airport where she cleans airplane cabins.

To address the "big challenges facing our union movement," Sweeney said, "We need dozens of cities like Los Angeles and thousands of organizing efforts like the one at San Francisco airport."

The council's three-day meeting kicked off with a *Respect Work, Strengthen Family* town hall meeting that brought together union and community activists and leaders to celebrate Los Angeles' vibrant union movement as a model of growth and change (see story at right).

Electrical Workers President John Barry, who has been with IBEW for more than 50 years, announced his retirement at the council meeting. He will be replaced by IBEW Secretary-Treasurer Edwin Hill. ☐



IBEW President Edwin Hill



Winter meeting: New IAM District 190 member Laura Freeland talks with IAM President Thomas Offenbarger.

The AFL-CIO Executive Council agreed in February to work toward organizing more than 700,000 workers in 2001—aiming for 1 million new members a year in 2002. At its winter meeting in Los Angeles, the council agreed to expand union outreach to immigrant workers (see story, p. 18) and work to ensure that future trade agreements protect workers. Council members also called for the federal budget surplus to be used to benefit all Americans, rather than for tax cuts that would go mostly to the wealthy. The council denounced California's misguided electricity deregulation and called for action to ensure a reliable, low-cost supply for the nation.

The AFL-CIO and global unions also announced a new campaign to post the International Labor Organization's 1998 declaration of fundamental rights at work in workplaces, union halls and government offices in 148 countries and territories. The declaration asserts workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively, to refuse forced



VIRGINIA LEE HUNTER

Work-family: In Los Angeles, nearly 700 union and community leaders joined in a *Respect Work, Strengthen Family* town hall meeting.



## Second Sight

In the eyes of thousands of school children and adults in Thailand, Air Line Pilots member Dave Anderson is a hero.

In 1998, Anderson, a first officer with United Airlines, read in the *Bangkok Post* about a Thai doctor who distributes free eyeglasses in Thailand's remote rural regions. Anderson, who travels regularly to Thailand, the birthplace of his wife, Siriwan, placed collection boxes in United's employee work areas. He quickly collected 400 pairs of eyeglasses, which his wife delivered to Dr. Pannet Pangputhipong, who sees a need for 2,000 pairs of glasses a month in rural Thailand.

Anderson also contacted the Lions Eyeglass Recycling Center of Northern Virginia, which agreed to provide a portion of the more than 4 million eyeglasses the Lions Clubs International collects annually. Anderson, who calls his program, "Second Sight for Sore Eyes," shipped 23,000 pairs of eyeglasses in August 1999 and 28,000 more a year later.

Anderson, who received one of United's Corporate Community Service Awards last year, is encouraging parallel programs among other pilots and airlines.

To find out how you can help, contact Dave Anderson at [cobber67@aol.com](mailto:cobber67@aol.com). ☐

## Awarding Unions' Work and Family Efforts

Five years ago, Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 2 in San Francisco negotiated a ground-breaking new benefit for workers: A child and elder care plan that helps those who work in the tourism business in "The City" balance work and family responsibilities. In February, the Alliance of Work/Life Professionals granted its annual Innovative Excellence Award to recognize the union's efforts. The Alliance includes business executives, child care providers researchers and human resources professionals.

"This award shows unions stand for family-oriented issues such as child care and

elder care that help all families," says Tho Do, Local 2 secretary-treasurer.

HERE Local 2's program enables more than 7,000 union members to apply for subsidies for child care, elder care and such youth programs as summer camp and karate lessons. The 37 union hotels pay into a fund that

has grown to more than \$2.5 million a year.

The Alliance gave another award to the Western New York Family Care Consortium, made up of four UAW locals and three companies.

In other examples of unions helping to strengthen families, the Carpenters last summer passed a resolution at their convention urging locals to become active in community child care campaigns and to work with employers to meet the demands of working parents. Meanwhile, Office and Professional Employees Local 320 in Missouri is celebrating the first anniversary of its child care apprenticeship program, which provides classroom and on-the-job training for child care workers, who then can become union members. ☐



LAURA ALISON

Quality care: OPEIU Local 320 in Missouri launched an apprenticeship program for child care workers.

## Carpenters, Community Build a Voice@Work

An old-time corrupt practice ran head on into a brand-new responsible contractor law and community mobilization in Clark County, Nevada, last year. When the dust cleared in January, 17 fired workers had their jobs back, and, together with 107 other construction workers, were covered under their first-ever contract with the Carpenters.

At Jetstream Construction, workers seeking to join the UBC complained that supervisors were forcing them to give between \$200 and \$280 a week of their pay to keep their jobs on a county school construction project, says UBC organizer Jim Sala. The workers, all Latino, were fired after making the complaints public.

When the company denied the charges, Sala says the union and the Las Vegas Interfaith Council for Worker Justice worked to bring Jetstream into the mainstream of responsible contractors through a 1999 state law. Passed with the strong backing of Nevada's unions, the law allows local and state lawmakers to consider a contractor's record of compliance with labor, workplace safety and wage and hours before granting public contracts.

Union members, community groups and the workers campaigned to persuade the Clark County School Board to ban Jetstream from school contracts for two years, a move that would

cost the company millions of dollars in lost business. After dozens of workers testified about the kickbacks at several school board meetings—packed with community allies—board members voted in September to bar Jetstream from school projects for two years.

Faced with a huge loss of funding, the company announced at a school board meeting in January it had fired the supervisors accused of the kickbacks, apologized for denying its responsibility, rehired the fired workers with back pay and agreed to the workers' choice of a voice with UBC and signed a contract. ☐

Eye contact: School children in Thailand model the glasses they received through the efforts of ALPA member Dave Anderson.

COURTESY DAVE ANDERSON



# AFTRA: Ruling Deals 'Severe Blow' to Diversity

At a time when minority ownership of commercial television stations is at its lowest level in more than a decade, a federal court dealt a "severe blow, and a setback on the path to true diversity in the broadcast industry," says Television and Radio Artists President Shelby Scott.

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled Jan. 16 that the Federal Communications Commission's equal opportunity rules, intended to increase job opportunities for women and minorities, were unconstitutional.

"Whatever gains women and minorities have made in this

industry can, in large part, be attributable to the FCC's employment and recruitment guidelines," says AFTRA Executive Director Greg Hessinger. The U.S. Commerce Department reported in January that minorities own less than 2 percent of commercial television stations and 4 percent of radio stations.

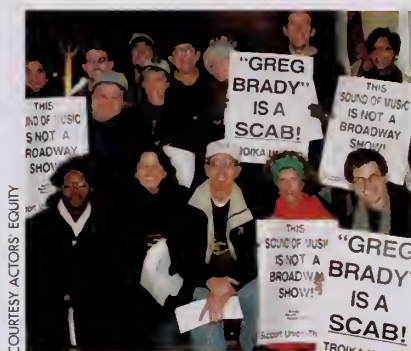
The union says it plans to monitor the impact of the decision and to build strategic alliances with national journalists' associations, strengthens ties with civil rights and community-based organizations and continue to call for an active FCC role in promoting fair recruitment policies in the broadcast industry. @

## 'The Sound of Music' Strikes Sour Note

Actors' Equity says Barry Williams is singing a sour tune when it comes to the 24-city tour of "The Sound of Music" in which Williams plays the lead role. The union fined Williams more than \$50,000 for breaking union rules by playing in the nonunion musical, produced by Rockville, Md.-based Troika Entertainment. Williams, best known as Greg Brady from the 1970s television sitcom "The Brady Bunch," was a union member for almost 30 years until he resigned last September.

"Troika has union contracts for stagehands and musicians," says union Executive Director Alan Eisenberg. "Where's the money for the actors? They deserve a fair share."

As part of the campaign to highlight Williams' renegade role, union members have



**Star power:** Equity members are holding informational pickets in cities across the country to protest Barry Williams' nonunion role.

penned parodies to many of the tunes in "The Sound of Music," as well as to the theme of "The Brady Bunch," which tells the story of "a guy named Williams," and "the way he became the Brady scab."

With the assistance of the AFL-CIO, actors and other union members held informational pickets at show openings across the nation and plan informational pickets at openings in Baltimore on March 27 and in Washington, D.C., April 3. @

## OUT FRONT

President George W. Bush needs a new calculator and new priorities.

He says the federal budget surplus can cover his welfare-for-the-rich tax cut plan and meet the needs of America's working families. He's wrong.

A realistic estimate of the surplus (excluding Social Security and Medicare trust funds and accounting for inflation and population growth) shows it will amount to some \$2 trillion over 10 years. Bush's proposed tax cut would cost about \$2.6 trillion—\$1.8 trillion for the cuts themselves plus \$800 billion in higher interest payments from failing to pay down the debt and other tax adjustments.

Not only would the working families who need it most get shut out from the tax cut largesse, the Bush scheme would leave nothing for investment in their priorities: health care, housing, education and strengthening Social Security.

The Bush plan is just one more example of our chief executive's preference for wealthy and corporate interests over those of working families. Within his first month in office, Bush selected civil rights and school desegregation opponent John Ashcroft as the nation's chief law enforcer. He pushed an attack on the standard to protect workers against ergonomic injuries. He scratched a requirement that taxpayer-funded projects be awarded to responsible companies rather than chronic lawbreakers. He issued executive orders ending project labor agreements, federal labor-management partnerships and job security for employees (mostly low-wage women) of service contractors in federal buildings. And he ordered government contractors to post notices telling employees how to avoid union membership and dues—but not telling them they have the legal right to a union voice at work.

With working family-friendly priorities and values, here's what we could do with a portion of the money Bush wants to squander on a tax cut that won't benefit those who need it or stimulate the economy:

- For \$375 billion, we could provide every Medicare beneficiary with prescription drug coverage.
- For \$185 billion, we could provide every American child a place in a modern, wired classroom.
- For \$315 billion, we could extend Medicaid coverage to 12 million adults and children.
- And by transferring part of the surplus to Social Security, we could ensure the soundness of America's most important family-sustaining social program.

These sound investments would leave sufficient funds for a fair tax cut that working people could use to improve their families' living standards and to boost the U.S. economy.

The budget surplus belongs to all Americans whose hard work and productivity created it. Get ready for a fight to claim it.

President Sweeney is shown with Roselia Mendez, a Santa Monica, Calif., hotel worker and new HERE member. @

## Get Ready to Fight for Our Future



BY JOHN J. SWEENEY



## Linda Church works as an assistant district counsel

for the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service amid the neon lights and Latin-jazz beat of Miami. Her other INS colleagues toil in cities as diverse as edgy downtown Manhattan, near the graceful Spanish-style arches of San Antonio and amid the balmy tropics of Hawaii. Although dispersed across the country, the professional staff of the INS general counsel office—attorneys, accountants, statisticians and engineers—became aware that some managers applied vacation and attendance policies differently than others. “We wanted equity for everyone,” says Church, who spearheaded a union organizing drive with AFGE. Because the 500

workers all reported to the same general counsel, they decided to organize as a national unit. “Organizing each office individually would not have given us the clout we wanted,” says Church.

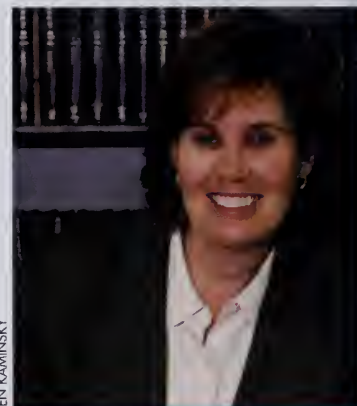
The far-flung workforce posed a challenge to organizers. They could not leaflet at a plant gate or hold a membership meeting at a nearby diner. So Church turned to a technology that enabled her to spread the union message instantaneously to hundreds of people across the country: e-mail. “Over five time zones, there’s really no other way to communicate effectively,” she says. “E-mail was our lifeblood.”

Church wrote organizing updates on her home computer and set up an interactive website. The effort culminated in a September 1999 vote to join AFGE. Electronic communications remained a crucial tool during contract negotiations as the new AFGE Local 511 members received and filled out contract surveys via e-mail. They now are negotiating a contract that will include clauses allowing the local to use e-mail for union representation and to post its own virtual bulletin board on the INS website. “Now I have a relationship with people all over the country whom I’ve never met,” says Church, interim president of Local 511.

More and more workers are buying ever-more affordable computers, getting online, surfing the World Wide Web and communicating through sophisticated electronic gadgets. And unions are utilizing the power of these technologies to step up organizing, political activism and solidarity during strikes. For many unions, technology is proving to be a crucial complement to the core strategy of building union strength: worker-to-worker contact.

Union Privilege is working to ensure that union leaders have the technology they need to help them bring a voice to working families. It is providing state federations and central labor councils that are part of the New Alliance, the union movement’s restructuring and revitalizing initiative, with computers and Internet access. The union groups will have their own listservs and other specially tailored electronic communications systems to help them share information.

“Cyberunions” will allow “unprecedented access of everyone in labor to everyone else,” says Art Shostak, a sociology professor



LEN KAMINSKY

**Connected:** New AFGE member Linda Church used e-mail to help organize co-workers in the far-flung offices of the INS.

ORGANIZING,  
BARGAINING  
AND  
MOBILIZING

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

# Downloading 'e-strategies



at Drexel University in Philadelphia and author of *CyberUnion: Empowering Labor Through Computer Technology*.

"America's new cyberunions will show the world that unionism does 'compute' in our age of information."

New technologies "are the most accessible ways to reach employees," says Charles Craver, a labor law professor at George Washington University Law School in Washington, D.C. "If unions are going to survive, they are going to have to organize health care, high-tech and service workers," he says, "and unions are going to have to reach these sectors and these workers with e-mail and new technologies." Some 60 percent of union members have computers, according to a poll by Peter D. Hart Research Inc. conducted in January 2000. The survey also found that 74 percent of union members with computers have Internet access.

Organizing by e-mail is one of many "e-strategies" union members are employing in their efforts to strengthen the union movement and enable workers to have a voice at work. Here are examples of other union "e-action."

### The Internet plays in Peoria

The 150 workers who install and repair alarms at SecurityLink from Ameritech in suburban Chicago work out of company trucks in which they drive to different job sites directly from their homes each day. As with the organizing effort of INS lawyers, forming a union took a leap into cyberspace.

"This was a very difficult group to organize, because they were not all in one place," says Tom Hopper, business agent for Electrical Workers Local 21. Although they lost elections in 1996 and 1997, the workers were undaunted. They published a webpage with an online newsletter written by workers, with submissions coming in via e-mail. Electronic communications helped the workers build enough cyber-solidarity that in October 1998, they won their efforts to get a voice on the job—even after the company fired organizing committee members days before the election—and today have a strong contract.

Eager to ensure their struggle would help other workers, union leaders set up "meta-



MATT DAYHOFF

**Truckin':** When your office is a truck, online organizing is the road to success, as proved by these IBEW Local 21 members in Illinois.

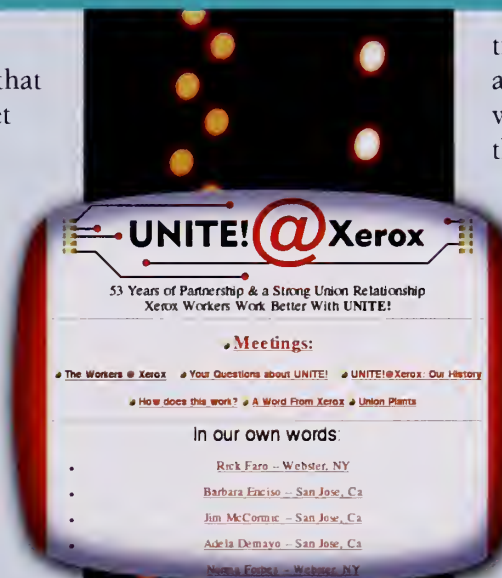
tags" on their website, an index entry for a website that makes it easier for Internet surfers to find what they want and for websites to publicize their contents. The foresight paid off when workers at an Ameritech subsidiary in central Illinois found Local 21's website and subsequently organized workers throughout the state via e-mail: "No big phone bills," says Al Morrison, who galvanized his co-workers at the Peoria subsidiary.

Other organizing campaigns are using e-mail and websites to mobilize far-flung workers, such as the ongoing effort among 20,000 flight attendants at Delta Air Lines to form a union with the Flight Attendants. But plenty of centralized or concentrated workplaces have benefited as well, such as the 163 high-tech workers at Tektronix outside Portland, Ore., who make color printers and sought to organize with UNITE. Because the Tek-

tronix workers have access to computers with Internet service in their break room for personal use, union organizers could visit workers during their breaks, point the computer browser to [www.uniteatxerox.org](http://www.uniteatxerox.org) and enable workers to get information about UNITE and read words of encouragement from already-unionized workers at other Xerox-owned companies. Last May, the workers won their bid to join a union and in November, another unit of 107 temporary workers also joined UNITE Local 14-Z.

### Year-round political action

During the 1998 election season, the Nevada State AFL-CIO was using what at the time was state-of-the-art



# for 21st-century union action





AP PHOTO/TINA FINEBERG

**Multimedia:** Actress Julianna Margulies appeared on a video clip on the AFL-CIO website in support of last year's SAG/AFTRA strike.

technology. Activists identified pro-union voters they contacted through phone banks and precinct walks on paper printouts with supermarket-style bar codes next to voters' names. They scanned the bar

tedious scanning—hours that could be spent talking with voters—while producing piles of lists that quickly became obsolete. A self-described “techno-phile,” Thompson vowed to find a better way. He arrived at a solution after he bought Palm Pilots for his staff, who used the compact, hand-held computers for office management. Thompson knew the devices had the potential to do much more, and hired a computer expert to develop a program to track voter contacts, creating a virtually paperless means of getting out the vote.

During the 2000 election, volunteers looked up voters' addresses on their Palm Pilots and recorded responses directly into the computer with a pen-like stylus. They walked to the next house on their list with the help of directions generated by the computer program. At the end of a precinct walk, the valuable data describing which voters planned to vote for pro-worker candidates was directly downloaded—“hot-synched” in Palm Pilot parlance—into a database spreadsheet. No maps, no bar codes, no waiting for printouts. “It frees the volunteers to do the worker-to-worker contact,” he says. “We talked to more voters because we weren't spending time making up packets of maps and lists and scanning bar codes.”

One candidate who benefited from the unions' newfound techno-savvy is John

Oceguela, a member of Fire Fighters Local 1607, who won his bid for a state assembly seat: “The Palm Pilot allowed us to send people into the field with the whole district in their hands.” Oceguela won by a slim margin, a victory he credits to unions' get-out-the-vote campaign. “The technology will change the face of politics in Nevada—and it was neat to be part of it.”

Unions are harnessing the power of technology to advance a working family agenda not only during elections, but in off-election years as well. Texas AFL-CIO Communications Director Ed Sills sends out a daily e-mail newsletter with alerts for rallies and news from unions. But the newsletter's biggest impact comes during the Lone Star State's legislative session. “When there is a fast-developing action in the legislature, our activists know about it,” says Sills. Two years ago, after a legislator filed a paycheck deception bill to limit unions' ability to raise money to get their message out, the state federation e-mailed information about the author, the text of the bill and the arguments against it. Within days, the legislator who sponsored it had received so many opposition e-mails he decided not to proceed. “Instead of just lobbyists, there were rank-and-file members contacting legislators,” Sills says. “When we get everyone involved, it has a real impact.”

### Petition to Overnite Clients to Honour the ULP Strike

Teamsters' Article

Required fields are in bold

To:  
H. Lee Scott, Jr.  
EO, Wal-Mart Stores  
Robert Tillman  
CEO, Lowe's Companies  
Norman Aschrod  
EO, Lencos & Things

Alfred Rankin Jr.  
CEO, NACCO Hamilton Beach/Precision Sales

Warren Eisenberg & Leonard Feinstein  
EO, Bed, Bath & Beyond  
Richard A. Mancoske  
EO, Delta Faucet Company

At:  
www.scott@Wal-Mart.com  
address changed on 9/29/00  
webmaster@lowes.com  
customerservice@lencos.com  
customerservice@hamiltonbeach.com  
We had to remove this from the petition because  
Hamilton Beach started bringing back several  
pages of each petition. Petitioners can still send in  
this address separately.  
customerservice@bedbath.com  
Customerservice@deltafaucet.com  
webmaster@mancoske.com

codes and responses into a database. But Danny Thompson, the state federation's executive secretary-treasurer, was frustrated with the process. It took hundreds of volunteer-hours to do the



## Cyber-solidarity

When Julianna Margulies appears on screen, she typically has played the spirited nurse Carol Hathaway on the television hospital drama *ER*. But after members of the Screen Actors and Television and Radio Artists went on strike against advertisers last year, Margulies began appearing on a video portraying a union member—and this time she wasn't acting. A video clip of Margulies was among several on the AFL-CIO website in support of the actors' strike. Activists logging on could view their favorite celebrities talking about the importance of joining together in a union and such key issues in the strike as demands for wage cuts by corporate advertisers, and they could e-mail the video clips to friends.

The actors encouraged supporters to boycott products made by Procter & Gamble Co., an influential advertiser involved in the strike. Visitors to the site could e-mail P&G's CEO Alan G. Lafley, telling him they were part of the boycott. To draw union members to the site, union webmasters sent e-mails to activists who, in turn, generated 40,000 e-mails to advertisers in three weeks. The strategy was so effective that P&G board Chairman John Pepper wrote a letter to union leaders when the boycott ended, making a special request to them to take the link off their webpages. In October, SAG and AFTRA won improved compensation for actors on TV and radio commercials. And, keeping their eyes on future technological advances, they won jurisdiction over commercials made specifically for the Internet.

Similarly, the Teamsters send regular, tailored e-mail campaign updates to Bed, Bath & Beyond and Wal-Mart customers of Overnite Inc., a company that flagrantly violates workers' right to a voice on the job.

The Web and e-mail boycott campaign was one technological component of SAG's strike technology strategy. Another was posting photos and reports from picket lines and demonstrations across the country on the union's website. "Part of the reason actors stuck together was because people didn't feel isolated," says Greg Krizman, SAG spokesman. "The advertisers checked out the website daily, too, and they realized they couldn't run from New York, Los Angeles and Chicago to tape commercials and expect to be in for an easy ride."

Visually linking workers together in a cyber-picket line also contributed to the success of the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace/ International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers Local 2001. During the six-week strike at Boeing Co., Wayne Schwisow, the union's webmaster, published a daily summary of members picketing throughout the country at the Seattle-based aircraft maker's many locations. "Workers could see an immense list and it let them know they were having an effect," he says. Union members also could register on the site with their home e-mail addresses to receive notices of rallies and news. The resulting e-solidarity helped the workers win a strong contract in January 2000.

At Boeing, as with all successful campaigns involving

e-strategies, the Internet is just one part of a larger effort to communicate the desires of workers to come together into unions to improve their lives, strengthen their families and build their commu-

nities. The core of building union strength has been workers always talking to each other, one on one. Such technologies as e-mail and Palm Pilots help amplify workers' voices "to be successful in organizing and to

save money," says IBEW's Hopper. "But you have to balance it with face-to-face contact, which is the best way to communicate with workers." @

## Low-Cost Computers for Union Members

Union members can get special low prices on IBM desktop and laptop computers, loaded with a choice of software. They come with one year of free Internet access. Check out [www.workingfamilies.com](http://www.workingfamilies.com) for more information. @



MICHELLE THOMPSON

Plugged in: Canvassing door-to-door during the 2000 elections was a lot easier in Nevada, where the state federation equipped union activists with Palm Pilots.



# The Prescription Dilemma

**Last May, Maine became the first state to approve legislation enabling residents without prescription drug coverage to buy medication at discounted prices.**

The efforts of SEIU Local 1989, along with a coalition of community activists, were key to its passage. Now, although the pharmaceutical industry has challenged the Maine law in court, Maine supporters are forging onward with their own court challenges. And around the country, union activists and AFL-CIO state federations in more than 30 other states are crafting their local responses to the rising drug price dilemma. "Getting a handle on prescription prices is crucial to strengthening America's working families," says SEIU President Andrew L. Stern.

Activity at the state level is the focus today. With President George W. Bush in the White House, many experts are doubtful that anything serious—a meaningful Medicare drug benefit for seniors and the disabled, for starters—will happen anytime soon in Congress. Bush's proposal to give states money to help the poorest Medicare beneficiaries buy drugs does nothing to contain drug costs, says John Freeman, Midwest director for the Center for Policy Alternatives, which has partnered with the AFL-CIO to help activists and legislators craft state prescription drug bills.

"It's a typical Bush Band-Aid approach, and using tax dollars to support the unconscionable practices of America's most lucrative industry," Freeman says. And because the Bush plan does nothing to arrest rising prices, he adds, it would encourage the scenario in which health maintenance organizations offering drug benefits continue dropping Medicare enrollees.

Making prescription drugs available and affordable for low-income families and seniors is part of a stepped-up series of union initiatives that seek passage of working family issues at the state

level, including such issues as equal pay, a Patients' Bill of Rights and paid family leave.

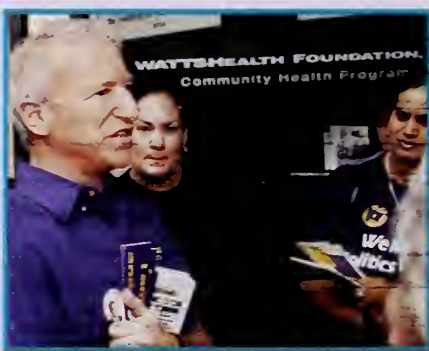
This year, as state legislatures convene, union activists are lobbying for and educating voters about bills that create drug buyer pools—some including only Medicare recipients, others adding the working poor and government employees. These state-run pools would negotiate discounts for their members similar to those drug manufacturers routinely now offer to large health plans and Medicaid, the federal health program for the poor.

In Washington State, federation lobbyist Robby Stern is working with affiliates, faith-based organizations and community activists to build consensus on legislation Democratic Rep. Eileen Cody, a member of SEIU Local 1199NW, plans to carry through the state house. Stern says the bill likely will include a buyer pool and possibly a clause compelling drug companies to negotiate discounts by putting their drugs on a Medicaid prior-authorization list—a move that would decrease their profits—if they refuse.

Predictably, lobbyists for drug companies are telling legislators that buyer pools will decrease profits needed for research. But at least one Wall Street powerhouse disagrees. According to a 1999 report by Merrill Lynch & Co., a federal bill that

would give the nation's 39 million and rising Medicare beneficiaries a 40 percent discount on drugs would decrease drug company profits only minimally—and possibly would increase them, because lower prices would bring greater sales. "Clearly, the same thing would happen on the state level with buyer pools," predicts Freeman.

This is information activists can use to lobby legislators afraid to challenge the pharmaceutical industry, which, according to the citizen activist group Public Citizen, donated approximately \$23 million to political campaigns and parties—80 percent to Republicans—between 1997 and 2001.



JOHNNY KNOX

**Affordability: Getting a handle on prescription drug prices is crucial for the nation's working families, says SEIU President Andrew L. Stern.**

## Seeking Solutions State by State



# Drug

Jane Birnbaum

Last year in Illinois, AFSCME Council 31 paid for buses that twice brought approximately 1,000 seniors—including 300 AFSCME and UAW retiree activists—to the capitol in Springfield for votes on a buyer pool bill sponsored by Democratic state Rep. Jack Franks and Democratic state Sen. Debbie Halvorson.

In the House, Illinois AFL-CIO President Margaret Blackshere testified for the bill, which passed 63-to-37 with 18 abstentions. In Illinois's more conservative Senate, retirees chanted from the gallery, demanding its leader bring the bill to a vote—he refused. "It was wild," recalls Bill Perkins, Council 31 political director. "The gallery became so boisterous, legislators gavelled the session to an end and fled."

One of the activists there was Doris Clark, a former payroll supervisor and president of AFSCME Retiree Chapter 31. "This is a critical issue for retirees, especially the older ones, because pensions are so low retirees already can't live off them and drugs are so expensive," she says. "And people without pensions, like women alone living on Social Security—they're even worse off."

Clark and other union activists plan to continue the fight in the upcoming legislative session, in which Franks says the measure "has

## The Bush administration's

proposal to give states money to help the poorest Medicare beneficiaries buy drugs is a "typical Bush Band-Aid approach, and using tax dollars to support the unconscionable practices of America's most lucrative industry."

—John Freeman, Midwest director for the Center for Policy Alternatives

RESPECT  
**WORK**  
STRENGTHEN  
**FAMILY**  
AFL-CIO

a better chance of passage this year because it's not as politically charged in an off-election year."

Unions also are counting on retiree support in such states as Georgia, where union leaders and legislators are shaping legislation that Democratic state Sen. Donzella James will carry. "Our

affiliates committed to this issue, in some cases because it affects their memberships, and generally because they know it's wrong for our seniors to choose between food and medicine," says Georgia State AFL-CIO President Richard Ray.

One union bound to play an active role is the UAW. "We hear constantly from our active and retired members about drug costs," says Bo Marlow, vice president of UAW Local 882 and president of the UAW Georgia State Action Program, which conducts community and political outreach. "Between just three Atlanta UAW locals—10, 34 and 882—we have over 4,000 retirees and some of them are radical," he adds.

"When the vote wasn't right in Florida in last year's presidential election, it took two buses for Local 10's retirees to go there. Just give them a day, and they'll be at our state capitol on this issue." @

action: In Chicago last October, a  
n of union and community groups  
for legislation that would make  
tion drugs more available and  
ible.



ate





# Mapping the Way to



Union leaders are mapping the road to Union City by organizing, mobilizing, reaching out to community allies and building the strength to improve working families' lives. This fall, these local union movements will be honored at the AFL-CIO convention.

By Lauren Lazarovici

**T**he road to Union City runs along the crashing waves of the Pacific Ocean into San Francisco, where activists banded together to help low-paid immigrant airport workers. To get to Union City on the East Coast, cross the Potomac River on I-395 into the District of Columbia and meet with union leaders who use advanced technology to mobilize in support of workers. From the Canadian border, take I-35 south into Union City, arriving in St. Paul, where activists energized community allies to fight off privatization of city services that would have harmed all residents.

"Union City" is not a single place—it flourishes in every city in which union leaders and activists create communities in which employers respect the contributions of working

families, workers and their communities join together in common action and elected officials are held accountable for their votes and actions. In Union City, unions are organizing, mobilizing and reaching out to community allies, building the strength to improve working families' lives.

"Magazines often rank cities on livability," says Machinists President Tom Buffenbarger, who chairs the State and Local Central Bodies committee of the AFL-CIO Executive Council. "They seldom analyze what makes a city livable. To me, the most livable cities are those that have strong, mutually supportive unions, cities where a worker never stands alone. And that's the ultimate goal of the Union City campaign."



# Union City

**Heat: Rallies such as the September day of global action have helped workers of HERE Local 27 in Washington, in strong contracts while making the union between their struggle and the tensions caused by unchecked globalization.**

Five years ago, central labor councils reoriented their priorities and set strategies (see box, page 16) to better focus on organizing and building a movement that would take working families' struggles to their commu-

nities. And at the biennial AFL-CIO convention this October, union leaders plan to recognize local efforts that have met the Union Cities goals and positively changed their communities.

In preparation, the AFL-CIO is encouraging activists to nominate their communities to be Union Cities. The Executive Council will review the nominations and this summer, officers will tour the cities named as finalists before designating a group of Union Cities. A national Union Cities conference is scheduled in conjunction with the AFL-CIO convention, and communities recognized as Union Cities will be eligible for computer equipment, local union leadership training at the National Labor College and other incentives designed to encourage other communities to travel the road to Union City.

Dozens of labor councils already are on the road to Union City. Here is how some of them are reaching the milestones on that path.

## Organizing

Until last summer, the mostly immigrant service workers at San Francisco International Airport earned wages so low many had to work two or three jobs. In spring 1999, the San Mateo County Central Labor Council brought together its affiliate unions and the San Francisco Labor Council to explore a collaboration to help the workers organize. (The airport, in San Mateo, is governed by San Francisco.) Six unions—Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees, Machinists, Office and Professional Employees, SEIU, Teamsters and United Food and Commercial Workers—backed the effort. "We shared not only financial resources but human resources as well," says Don Barker, San Francisco Organizing Project coordinator. "We spent our time better by working together."

Launching the project went smoothly because both labor councils have a strong history of political activism in the area. "We've worked hard to elect public officials who will support us in our efforts for things like card-check and quality standards, which help uphold workers' dignity," says Walter Johnson, secretary-treasurer of the San Francisco Labor Council. "And make sure they understand loyalty."

Unions maintained strong relationships with elected officials and the San Francisco Airport Commission, which laid the foundation for a far-sighted organizing strategy: Instead of battling

hostile employers one by one, unionists first would level the playing field with a living wage that boosted annual salaries to more than \$21,000 a year with health insurance. This effort was followed up quickly by taking advantage of a card-check labor peace agreement that helped avoid drawn-out battles. The airport commission in February 2000 passed the agreement, which requires employers to recognize the union after a majority of workers sign cards requesting a voice on the job in exchange for labor peace.

Workers came together in a quick succession of impressive wins. Last summer, 375 workers at Argenbright Security won a voice on the job. The screeners, guards and wheelchair assistants joined SEIU Local 790 and the baggage handlers joined IBT Local 665. Flight Attendants, Air Line Pilots and Transport Workers joined the initial delegation requesting recognition for their air-

port brothers and sisters. "If locals had tried to do this individually," says Brenner, "we wouldn't have had the collective strength."

Within eight months, workers at all the screening subcontractors had joined unions. So did two groups of retail workers, choosing a voice at work with UFCW Local 101. In January, 400 ground service mechanics, ramp attendants and baggage handlers employed by Swissport joined Machinists Local 1414. Today, some 2,000 service workers are union members. The campaign enabled activists to benefit from each others' complementary strengths, says Joe Brenner, assistant secretary-treasurer of the San Mateo County CLC. "In our outreach to people on the job, they see people from lots of unions working together, so they see we're all part of a movement," says Brenner. "No one union makes a movement. It's all of us work-

ing together for social and economic justice."

That same spirit of unity boosted the organizing efforts of the 1,600 graduate student employees at the University of Washington in Seattle who came together in December as the Graduate Student Employee Action Coalition, a UAW affiliate. The King County Labor Council helped build solidarity, and construction workers and bus drivers pledged not to cross picket lines if the



TIM REAGAN

**Strong support: AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson joins with members of the San Francisco organizing campaign.**



ROBERT HOUSER

**Organizing for a Union City: Workers at San Francisco's airport are joining with six unions to get a voice at work.**



# Here's what it takes to be a Union City:

- Promote organizing by supporting affiliate unions' efforts.
- Mobilize 1 percent of members with Street Heat actions.
- Take grassroots political action with increased voter registration and turnout and door-to-door political campaigns.
- Build union-community alliances with people of faith, civil rights and women's organizations.
- Demand diversity on labor council committees and bodies.
- Train a new generation of leaders.
- Raise a public voice with media events and regular communication with activists. ■

student teachers went on strike. "By helping build their strength, we increased our stature in the community," says Steve Williamson, labor council executive secretary-treasurer. "It pays off to do the work because it builds for the next time."

## Street Heat

Labor council leaders are accustomed to getting last-minute phone calls from union leaders pleading, "Can you help us with a rally?" When leaders at the Metropolitan Washington (D.C.) Council get these calls, they help local affiliates map a campaign plan—including the strategic application of Street Heat, the mass mobilization of workers and allies to challenge employers thwarting workers' freedom to choose a voice on the job.

When employers see how quickly labor councils organize rallies and mass actions, they think twice about using unfair tactics during organizing and contract campaigns. Successful labor councils like the one in Washington, D.C., constantly educate union members and allies about campaigns in the area so activists are well-informed enough to mobilize quickly.

"As long as the struggle to organize workers and win a decent standard of living is limited to a battle between local unions and employers, our strength will be severely limited," says Jos Williams, council president. Williams' impressive Street Heat program keeps the D.C.-Maryland union movement as well as elected officials and the media informed through the group's "Union City!" newsletter, which goes out to 3,000 activists via e-mail and 700 more by fax every week and includes short news items and calls to action. Activists who turn up at rallies are asked to sign a blue card that includes a space to write down their e-mail address.

The council's Street Heat initiatives have helped parking lot workers, members of HERE Local 27, win strong contracts and maintain momentum in organizing campaigns. On Sept. 26, 2000, a global day of action organized around the World

Bank/International Monetary Fund meeting in Prague, the Czech Republic, the council mobilized more than 100 activists in support of the parking lot workers, many of whom are African immigrants, linking their struggle to the dislocations caused by unchecked globalization. They also have helped members of the District of Columbia Nurses Association (not affiliated with the AFL-CIO) win a contract, ending a six-week strike. "When people start to show up at each others' picket lines, they feel a real sense of community," says Chris Garlock, the council's Street Heat coordinator, who says DCNA members now come to council meetings.



**Organized: A multi-union strategy is proving successful for workers seeking a voice at work at San Francisco International Airport.**

## Community alliances

When the mayor of St. Paul, Minn., proposed privatizing certain city services in September 1998, he at first refused to meet with union leaders to discuss their concerns. In response, the St. Paul AFL-CIO Trades and Labor Assembly put together a coordinated campaign involving unions and community groups, focusing on informing the public about the harmful impact of privatization on the quality of city services. The campaign worked—and many union leaders acknowledge they could not have won on their own.

"Having the labor council involved made a huge difference," says Robin Madsen, president of AFSCME Local 1842 and driver of the city's bookmobile. "If we had tried to do it alone, it would have been 'us versus them' instead of being about the issues."

Labor council activists held a training session on how privatization would harm workers and city services—for instance, by potentially threatening the quality and reliability of water service. The 29 unions representing city employees drafted "principles of participation" outlining criteria on how bidding should take place. By spring, the coalition—now called the St. Paul Works! Alliance—was holding informational meetings for city employees and allies in the



nonprofit and religious communities, rallying the troops with colorful buttons and stickers.

"Our message about the proposal was: 'too far, too fast, too risky,'" says Shar Knutson, president of the labor council, which sent out a brochure with this message to all union members and community allies.

After the mayor put two services out for bid in May 1999, a city council ally introduced legislation giving the council the right to vote on contracts—which passed unanimously in July. The victory was no fluke: Years before this controversy erupted, union activists knocked on doors and dialed phones on behalf of pro-worker candidates. "Our current political effectiveness comes from our political activism and our political strength at the polls," says Knutson.

Activists used the same techniques to mobilize support for a city council hearing on companion legislation that would set fair rules for privatization. The labor council geared up phone banks, leafleting and a petition drive to boost turnout, which exceeded 1,000 people, including members of Congress. A year after the mayor initially proposed privatization, the city council placed restrictions on it—even overriding the mayor's veto.

Unions not affected by privatization plans eagerly lent a hand because "they saw it as

an issue of solidarity," says Knutson. Many members of HERE Local 17 and several Teamsters locals attended a huge summertime rally. And when HERE Local 17 went on strike against several hotels in the summer, "people who otherwise may not have been out there were," Knutson notes. "They knew how important it was."

### Grassroots political action

For the San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council, involving union members in grassroots political action doesn't just happen around election time—it's a year-round education and mobilization effort in support of issues affecting working families. This commitment means members are well-versed about issues and candidates when election time rolls around—and ready to start knocking on doors and dialing phones. The strategy paid off in November 2000 when union activists replaced an anti-union congressman with a champion of working families.

"We believe that what you do between elections is the most important work you do to win," says labor council Political Director

Donald Cohen. "It means educating and building the base during that time so that by the election, they are ready to engage."

In 1996, the labor council ran a successful campaign to save a California requirement that calls for overtime pay for working more than eight hours in one day. The state's Industrial Welfare Commission had rescinded the rule, costing California's working families \$1 billion a year.

"We got hundreds of people to an IWC hearing in San Diego,"


says Cohen. More than 150 activists jammed the meeting room, and an overflow crowd of 300 more rallied outside. "We treated it like an organizing or political campaign. We phoned, mobilized and spoke at union meetings." Because of similar efforts around the state, workers mobilized to help elect a worker-friendly governor, who signed a new law in July 1999 restoring overtime pay.

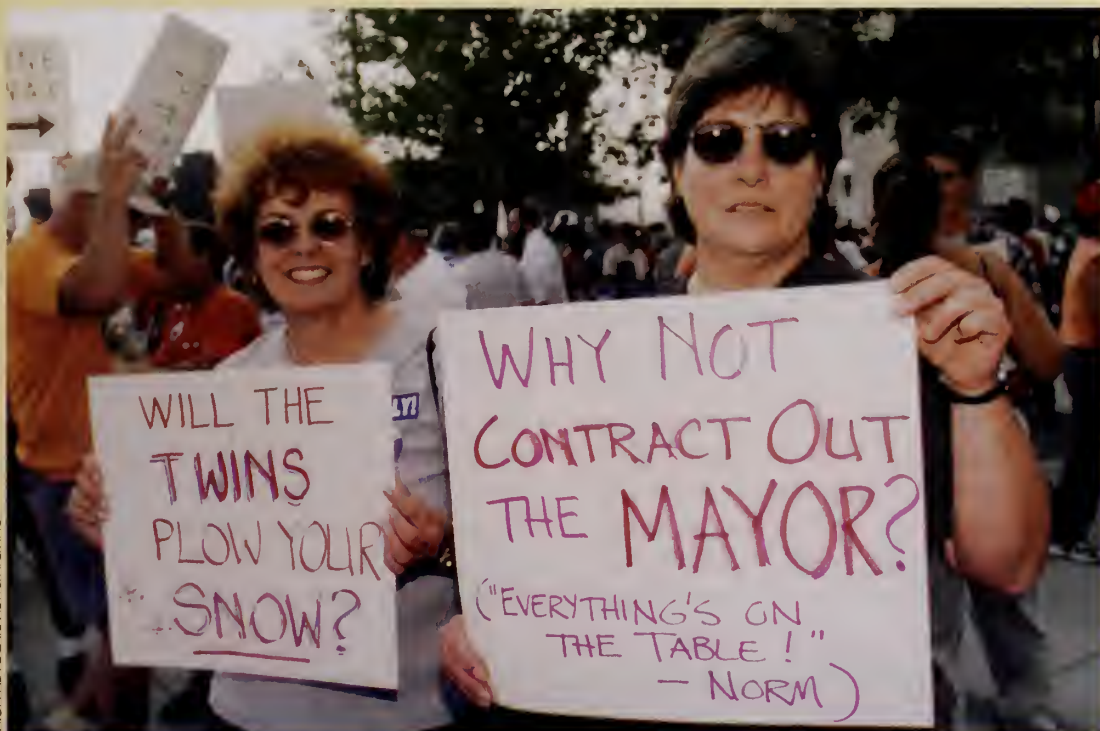
The victory energized activists who, in 2000, eagerly walked precincts and phoned union members on behalf of Susan Davis, a pro-worker congressional candidate running against a popular incumbent. In November, Davis ousted her opponent by less than 4 percentage points.

The overtime campaign, says Cohen, "helped us win elections because people were engaged and it was clear to them who makes decisions and why that it is important."

As in San Diego, St. Paul, Minn., Washington, D.C., and San Mateo, Calif., activists in Union Cities around the country are bringing together the collective strengths of unions and fighting for better communities. With this renewed sense of mutual support, they are proving that the "road" to Union City runs through the hearts and minds—and hands and feet—of activists committed to improving the lives of working families.

## Is your community a Union City?

Nominate your city by May 1 at [www.aflcio.org/union-city/nominate.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/union-city/nominate.htm) or by faxing 202-637-5012. Include the name of your central labor council, your city and state and why your hometown should be a Union City. 



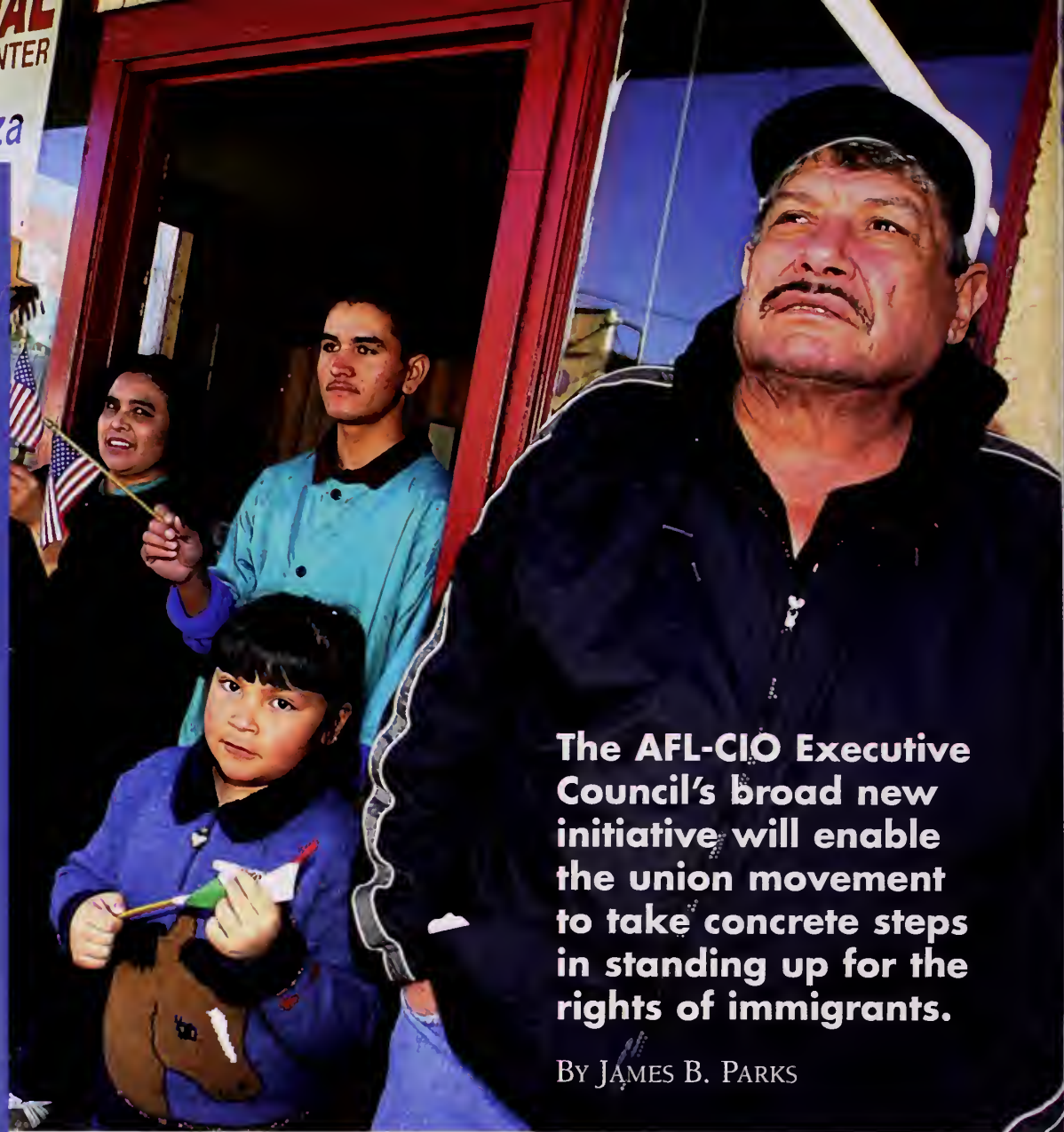
Grassroots mobilization: A multi-pronged effort by unions stopped a plan to privatize city services in St. Paul.



**A**lfonso Castro and Melecio Chavez Santillan came to the United States from their native Mexico seeking a better life for their families. But like so many immigrants, the two men, who work for a Phoenix roofing contractor, found they were exploited by their employers. They are required to work sometimes 60–70 hours a week in temperatures that reach on average 115 degrees in the summer. Before they started seeking a voice at work with the United Union of Roofers and Waterproofers, their employers refused to provide water and ice. The workers, whose pay is based on the number of roofing tiles they place per week, say they frequently are cheated of their wages, because the companies routinely misrepresent the size of the roof they worked on. If for some reason the roof leaks after it is installed, the employers also require workers—who often make as little as \$200 per week—pay for the damage to the home. When they tried to improve their working conditions by joining a union, they were met with hostility and harassment by their employers.

“I am working with the union to earn a better wage, health care and have more time with my family,” Castro said, speaking through an interpreter. “We are mistreated and we are abused, but we are working to improve that,” Santillan also says. The two men are seeking a voice on the job with the United Union of Roofers and Waterproofers to reform a piece-pay system that often shorts them of their wages.

“We wanted a living wage and health care. That’s why we want a union,” says Vera Miranda, an immigrant from Guatemala who works as a housekeeping supervisor at the Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel. A 12-year hotel employee, Miranda is the mother of four children. Early last year, concerned with such issues as affordable health insurance, work schedules and wages, she joined an organizing effort with the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees.



**The AFL-CIO Executive Council’s broad new initiative will enable the union movement to take concrete steps in standing up for the rights of immigrants.**

BY JAMES B. PARKS

Castro, Santillan and Miranda told their stories Feb. 14 at an AFL-CIO Executive Council press conference in Los Angeles, at which council members announced a major new initiative to change conditions for the hundreds of thousands of immigrants working in the United States.

The initiative seeks to gain laws that respect the contributions of immigrants, educate union members and the public about immigrant issues, inform immigrants of their rights and mobilize the union movement to enforce them.

The initiative, which follows a series of immigrant workers’ rights forums held across the country last year, is the next stage in the union movement’s campaign to stand up for the rights of immigrants. The council took a

bold step in February 2000 and adopted a new immigration policy that called for replacing the current system of immigration enforcement, which includes employer sanctions for hiring undocumented workers.

The forums brought together immigrant workers and community and union leaders for in-depth, full-day sessions to discuss potential solutions to the workplace problems and exploitation immigrant workers face in this nation.

“Immigrant workers and their families make significant contributions to employers, communities and our country,” says AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson. “Yet immigrants face some of the most abusive working conditions and are excluded from much of American society—

# Securing Immigrant



**You deserve respect from the nation that will let you work as long as you work for less, but I throw you out when you demand an honest day's pay."** —Laborers President Terence O'Sullivan

and that harms all working people."

"We are building on a year of work with action," says HERE President John Wilhelm, who chairs the Executive Council's immigration committee.

Under the initiative, the union movement will expand its fight for better enforcement of existing workplace laws to include new rules covering workplace safety and health, wages and discrimination. Unions will join with community allies to push for legislation that legalizes the status of millions of immigrant families.

"In every city and small town in America there are immigrant workers. A labor-community alliance is essential to achieving the goals of the union movement and the immigrant community," Wilhelm says.

### Expanding outreach

Because loopholes in the immigration laws allow employers to use the threat of deportation to exploit immigrant workers, the union movement will continue efforts to replace the current system of employer sanctions with a system that penalizes abusive employers and that provides whistle-blower protection for immigrant workers who try to improve their working conditions.

The union movement will work with the George Meany Center for Labor Studies and the National Labor College to expand language training and educational resources, such as bilingual materials. A task force of organizers that has been successful in helping immigrants organize will contribute to a resource center to share successful strategies.

The initiative also includes a strong organizing effort by unions at the local level. The AFL-CIO is urging its affiliate unions to begin hiring immigrant organizers, eliminate prohibitive member initiation fees and address immigrant issues.

To help unions build stronger bonds with immigrants, the federation called for central labor councils, state labor federations and local unions to become information resources for immigrant workers about their rights in the workplace and to mobilize their member unions to help enforce those rights.

The AFL-CIO also plans to seek additional resources from foundations and other sources to support outreach efforts, including hiring organizers.

### Giving immigrants the respect they deserve

Less than a month before the new initiative was announced, nearly 5,000 union, religious and community members and immigrant workers marched and rallied in Oakland, Calif., Jan. 27 to urge local and national leaders to better protect the rights of immigrants. Chanting "*Si, Se Puede*" ("Yes, we can do it") and "*Estamos aquí, no vamos ir*" ("We are here, we are not going to go"), they marched through the streets of Oakland "to show the legislators that there is a need to review our immigration policies and that there is grassroots support for change," says Judith Goff, president of the Alameda County Central Labor Council.

Immigrants constitute the majority of new workers in California, Goff says. Most work in low-paying jobs. They need the protections they can get from a union, she says, but the immigration laws are being used as tools against them when they try to organize.

"You deserve respect from the nation that will let you work as long as you work for less, but will throw you out when you demand an honest day's pay," Laborers President Terence O'Sullivan told marchers. "It is past time that this country gives [immigrants] the respect, the pay and the rights [they] have struggled and fought for."

The marchers called for legislation to fundamentally change the nation's immigration laws, including a general amnesty for all undocumented immigrants, repeal of employer sanctions, the end of guest worker and contract labor programs and expanded opportunities for legal immigration.

But that battle will be difficult, Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) told the crowd. "We have a tough fight on our hands," she said. "First of all, the wrong man was sworn into office. He doesn't understand what a real minimum wage is. We must teach him and stand together for working people." 📷



**Si, Se Puede:** HERE President John Wilhelm (top) signed a pledge to urge local and national leaders to better protect immigrants' rights, as nearly 5,000 union, religious and community members and immigrant workers rallied in Oakland, Calif., Jan. 27.

# Workers' Rights



# Boosting Skills for Better Manufacturing Jobs

**F**or the past three years, the union movement has been at the forefront of a national effort to improve job opportunities and training for manufacturing workers. Unions, with support from the AFL-CIO Working for America Institute, joined with employers and educators to create the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC), which recently developed a first-ever nationally recognized set of skills and standards required for workers in the manufacturing sector to get and keep good jobs in the new economy.

Initially, the standards will be used as a guide to training workers for good manufacturing jobs. The next step will be to develop a system to evaluate and certify a worker's skills, says Bruce Herman, program director of the Working for America Institute. When that system is in place, the standards, issued in the report, "A Blueprint for Excellence," will become a criteria for hiring or promoting workers. Once a worker is certified as having the necessary skills, any employer can tell at a glance that he or she is highly skilled and qualified, he says.

"The future is in high-skill, high-wage jobs—and strategic alliances between companies and unions are the best way for workers to gain the skills they need to compete for jobs," says Keith Romig, associate director of national and international affairs for PACE International Union.

Traditionally, manufacturers have trained workers to handle jobs in one company, and workers could not transfer their knowledge from one firm to another if they were laid off. But as today's economy becomes more mobile, jobs require more skills and workers need to be able to move from company to company, says Jacqueline Mullins, an international staff member at the Steelworkers. At the same time, older, skilled workers are retiring and younger workers are not going into manufacturing, she says. So workers are losing out on unfilled career-track, family-supporting jobs.



**Future planning: New nationwide skills and standards developed by unions, educators and employers will enable workers to get and keep good jobs in the new economy.**

Once workers are certified in the skills, they will gain a new level of job security and access to good jobs. The key benefit for workers is that the new skills certification will be portable and can be used in any manufacturing environment, says Trudy Humphrey, education director for IUE-CWA. "When a company moves or brings in new lines, workers—once they are certified—will have more flexibility and can move along with the work," she says.

"Employers have justified sending jobs offshore by claiming there is a shortage of skilled U.S. workers," says Michael Flynn, IAM apprenticeship and training director. "These new, clear standards will help us keep jobs and enhanced skills in our own country."

To develop the new standards, the MSSC interviewed and surveyed more than 4,000 front-line manufacturing workers and

supervisors—about 26 percent of whom belonged to unions—on the skills needed to perform their jobs. The standards, which take effect this spring, cover production; health, safety and environmental assurance; quality assurance; maintenance, installation and repair; manufacturing process development; and logistics and inventory control.

The unions ensured the new standards mirror the highest skill standards in the industry. "This is a fair and consistent way to evaluate skills. It's much better than the way it has been done," says Michael LaFave, the Sheet Metal Workers' director of production workers.

The MSSC is a voluntary partnership created by the Labor Department's National Skill Standards Board, which approved the new standards in January.

In addition to PACE, Steelworkers and SMWIA, the other unions involved in the MSSC are Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers; Electrical Workers; Glass, Molders, Pottery, Plastics; IUE-CWA; Machinists; Professional Airways Systems Specialists, a Marine Engineers affiliate; UAW; and UNITE. Congress, which funds the National Skills Standards Council, has not yet approved funding for the standards beyond fiscal year 2002.

The unions fought for and won assurances that the new standards would not compete with standards and certifications for maintenance, installation and repair work that currently are part of established apprenticeship programs, Herman said. Unions are seeking assurances that employers will not use the standards as an excuse to circumvent negotiated seniority systems in promotions.

In the long run, the new skills standards also will help rebuild the manufacturing industry and its unions, says Bob Stander, IBEW director of manufacturing. "We wanted to create an environment where new workers could believe there is a future in manufacturing and that the manufacturing unions could provide the training and help create opportunities for jobs." @

—James B. Parks

To obtain a copy of the MSSC skill standards, "A Blueprint for Excellence," visit [www.msscusa.org](http://www.msscusa.org), or fax requests to 202-289-7618.



## World Trade Leaders Run, But They Can't Hide

**C**learly shaken by the massive mobilization of union, environmental and human rights activists during world trade meetings in Seattle, Washington, D.C., and Prague, the Czech Republic, World Trade Organization leaders plan to hold their November meeting in the tiny, Middle Eastern country of Qatar. One possible reason: The Gulf kingdom prohibits all political protests.

"Arbitrary detention in security cases and restrictions on the freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, religion and on workers' rights continue to be problems," says a recent U.S. State Department report on human rights in Qatar.

"It's fitting that a group that negotiates behind closed doors should meet in a place where protest is forbidden," says Jeff Crosby, president of the North Shore (Mass.) Labor Council. He notes the WTO sets trade rules that often encourage nations to ignore workers' rights and environmental standards.

"This move makes it clear that our job is to bring these negotiations to light," adds Crosby, who is helping mobilize unionists to go to Quebec, Canada, in April, when leaders of Western Hemisphere nations will meet to discuss expanding the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas. "If people understand what's at stake, we win," he says. ☺



## Union Wedding Bell News

**M**ost grooms-to-be list their occupations and the names of their parents in their wedding announcements. But Billy Tynan IV also wanted to highlight the importance of unions to young people who are just beginning to form their own working families. In the December announcement in *The New York Times* of his marriage to Tara Meagher, Tynan included his membership in Laborers Local 1298 in Long Beach, N.Y.



"I'm proud to be in the union," says Tynan. "I make a decent living and I get all my work through the local." Now that he's a married man, he's thinking more about his family's future, and credits his union for negotiating pension benefits. "If you're going to work that hard, it is important to have something to show for it," he says.

The new Tynan family is all-union: Tara, who teaches deaf children in nearby Oceanside, is a member of AFT Local 1631. ☺

## Doin' the Hokey Pokey

**W**hile some of Harry Wolf's younger union brothers and sisters are paying the rent by rhyming and rappin', the

longtime member of Musicians Locals 717 and 2-197 continues to pay his bills by playing the *Schnitzelbank* song and other Teutonic favorites, gigging around the world with the Waterloo German Band. ("Ist das nicht eine Schnitzelbank" is a classic German folk-drinking tune. To hear a version, polka on over to <http://pionet.net/~kuseld/schnitzel.htm>.)

Formed in 1945 as The Thirsty Five (the quintet members had just reached legal drinking age), the band met its Waterloo name in the early 1960s. From their early days playing gigs near their home in Waterloo, Ill., 30 miles south of St. Louis, the musicians—who now number 17 members, including Wolf's son Russel—play at German festivals throughout the country and in Germany and even at the White House.

One instrument in the band draws lots of attention: the 12-foot-long, deep-throated Alpenhorns once used to communicate between European mountain villages.

The 70-year-old Wolf says his decades of union membership have been "real beneficial for us. It's great to know where to get advice and gives our band security knowing they are always ready to help if we need it."

Some of the highlights of a typical Waterloo German Band show include mystery melody and dance contests and a conga line followed by the Hokey Pokey, Chicken and Duckie Dance and prizes.

"We love to get the people on the floor and wear them out," he says. ☺



COURTESY HARRY WOLF

**Oompah pah:** The Waterloo German Band and its giant Alpenhorns once were used to communicate between mountain villages.



## To Your Health

**A**ffordable, quality health care is a top concern for many working families—and the Working Families Health Care Center section of [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org) is packed with extensive information tailored to today's members who are also savvy health care consumers.

Some topics you'll find include:

- **Share Your Story.** Have you had a problem with obtaining insurance coverage or getting access to quality care? Here's a space for your story, with all the details. And in sharing your story, you may also provide ammunition for AFL-CIO representatives testifying before legislators.

- **Checking the Pulse.** An ongoing poll with changing questions. For example, when your doctor prescribes a drug for you or a family member, do you always ask if there's a generic version available?

- **Appealing Decisions by Your Health Care Plan.** Having a plan deny coverage for a particular service or procedure that it says is not medically necessary or appropriate is an increasingly common complaint among consumers. Find tips here for fighting back.

- **Fact Sheet on Workers' Compensation and Medical Privacy.** More than 6 million workers are injured on the job every year. They should not have to fear that filing a claim for workers' compensation, which pays for medical care and lost wages, will result in retaliation, discrimination or employer blacklisting. Learn how to protect yourself in a clinch (also see box at bottom-right corner).

- **Curing the Nation's Health Care.** Ultimately, curing our health care crisis requires a policy change. Right now, the law leaves it up to employers to decide whether they'll pay their fair share of employees' health coverage. Some employers take the high road, but as long as coverage is voluntary, all employers have an incentive to shift as much cost as possible to workers.

- **Online Medical Resources.** Sites that give you information on ailments and treatments, the latest medical news, tips for staying healthy and fit, a range of resources on mental health and more. ☐

## Fixing Our Health Care System

[www.familiesusa.org/child.htm](http://www.familiesusa.org/child.htm)—Of the 45 million U.S. citizens without health insurance, one-fourth are children. To expand health coverage for these children, Congress in 1997 passed the State Children's Health Insurance Program. As this site demonstrates, extensive education and outreach is needed to bring eligible families into the program.

[www.nchc.org/know/quality\\_myths.html](http://www.nchc.org/know/quality_myths.html)—Beyond the problems with managed care, many other serious and widespread problems affect the quality of health care in the United States. One reason: Our system lacks comprehensive quality measurement and assurance programs advocated by the National Coalition on Health Care, a joint effort of unions, consumer and religious groups plus health care providers.

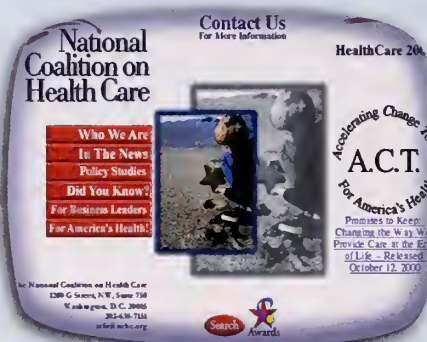
[www.nhelp.org](http://www.nhelp.org)—The National Health Law Program's website is an extensive resource for health care consumers and

advocates. It provides good background on health care issues affecting low-income families and the uninsured, with links to a comprehensive list of organizations and agencies nationwide.

[www.consumersunion.org/health/i-reform.htm](http://www.consumersunion.org/health/i-reform.htm)—As employers pay less for their employees' health care, providers are scrambling to cut costs, consolidating into large networks and changing to for-profit enterprises, according to the nonprofit Consumers Union. Growing numbers of working families are forced into HMOs and other managed care plans, it says, limiting care they receive and raising serious concerns about quality.

[www.aflcio.org/socialsecurity/healthy\\_choices.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/socialsecurity/healthy_choices.htm)—While Medicare works well today, it faces financial and other problems that must be solved for it to continue providing guaranteed benefits. Reforms must protect, preserve and improve the program without shifting costs to retirees and putting seniors at risk with untested and potentially dangerous voucher systems.

[www.citizen.org/hrp](http://www.citizen.org/hrp)—The nonprofit Public Citizen's Health Research Group fights for citizen and consumer justice and for government and corporate accountability. As an advocacy resource for making sure working families get the care they need, the site promotes research-based, systemwide changes in health care policy and provides advice and oversight concerning drugs, medical devices, doctors and hospitals and occupational health. ☐



## Workplace Safety and Health

[www.aflcio.org/safety](http://www.aflcio.org/safety)—You have a legal right to a safe workplace under the landmark 1970 Occupational Safety and Health Act. The law requires employers to provide workplaces free from recognized hazards and protects workplaces by setting and enforcing safety standards. You can learn all about your health and safety rights at this site.

[www.aflcio.org/rightsatwork/index.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/rightsatwork/index.htm)—Click here to learn about workers' rights at work and find help when employers violate those rights. In English, Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese, the site links to government agencies and advocacy organizations that advise workers what to do in such case as workplace injury.

[www.osha.gov/as/opa/worker/index.html](http://www.osha.gov/as/opa/worker/index.html)—Visit this site for questions and answers about your rights under the OSH act. The site includes information on federal and state job safety programs, how to file a formal complaint with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and your whistle-blower protections against retaliatory actions by employers. ☐



## PUBLICATIONS



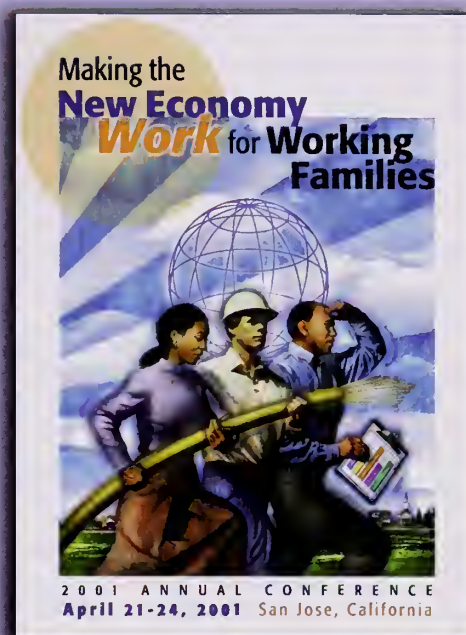
**Remembering Cesar: The Legacy of Cesar Chavez**, compiled by Ann McGregor and edited by Cindy Wathen, with photographs by George Elfie Ballis, is a personal and moving tribute to the late César Chávez, founder and president of the United Farm Workers. The firsthand accounts from 47 friends, interwoven with black-and-white photographs, portray a humble, principled man of vision, driven by a passion to improve the lives of farm workers. Endorsed by the César E. Chávez Foundation, the book's contributors include Coretta Scott King, Martin Sheen, Henry Cisneros, Jerry Brown, UFW staff, farm workers and the Chávez family. \$25. Quill Driver Books.

**Labor's Troubadour**, the autobiography of union baladeer Joe Glazer, details the life of a union musician who has lifted the spirits of workers for more than a half-century, singing on picket lines, in union halls and at conventions. Glazer worked for the Textile Workers Union of America and United Rubber Workers and helped found the Labor Heritage Founda-

tion, which seeks to strengthen the union movement through music and the arts. *Troubadour* includes the lyrics to 70 union songs. Available at bookstores or through Collector Records (\$25, plus \$3 for shipping and handling). To order, send a check made out to Collector Records, 9225 Wendell St., Silver Spring, Md. 20901-3533. For more information, e-mail collectorrecord@hotmail.com. @

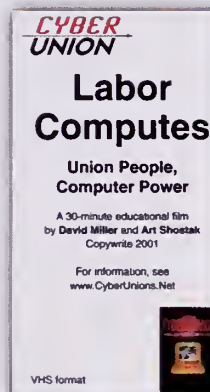
## CONFERENCE

**"Making the New Economy Work for Working Families,"** April 21-24 in San Jose, Calif., sponsored by the AFL-CIO Working for America Institute and the California Labor Federation, will feature sessions and workshops on building a high-road economy. Participants can learn new skills, identify successful job partnership strategies and exchange ideas about how employers can create and retain good jobs while following the high-road strategy that allows workers a voice at work. Workshops will cover the best practices in worker-centered counseling, skills assessment, career paths, training, education, and job planning, as well as financial planning and balancing work and family life. For more information, visit the institute's website, [www.workingforamerica.org](http://www.workingforamerica.org), contact the conference planner at 800-842-4734 or e-mail [smarion@workingforamerica.org](mailto:smarion@workingforamerica.org). @



## TRAVEL

**The 2nd Annual STITCH Women's Language School Delegation** combines Spanish instruction with an in-depth look at the economic reality facing Guatemalan women workers. The delegation will visit Guatemala City and the northern highlands of Guatemala May 19-27, 2001. At La Union school in Antigua, participants will talk with women workers trying to build democratic unions. The cost is \$800, which covers housing, meals, language instruction and domestic travel. Participants must pay their own way to Guatemala City. For an application, please e-mail Hannah Frisch at: [h52@aol.com](mailto:h52@aol.com). To learn more about STITCH, visit its website at [www.STITCHonline.org](http://www.STITCHonline.org). @



**"Labor Computes: Union People, Computer Power,"** a 30-minute video by David D. Miller, assistant to the dean at the Drexel University College of Design Arts, and Art Shostak, sociology professor at Drexel University, shows local and international unions new ways computers and other technology can aid in union building. \$40, plus \$4 shipping. Bulk rates available. For more information, e-mail Art Shostak at [shostaka@drexel.edu](mailto:shostaka@drexel.edu). @

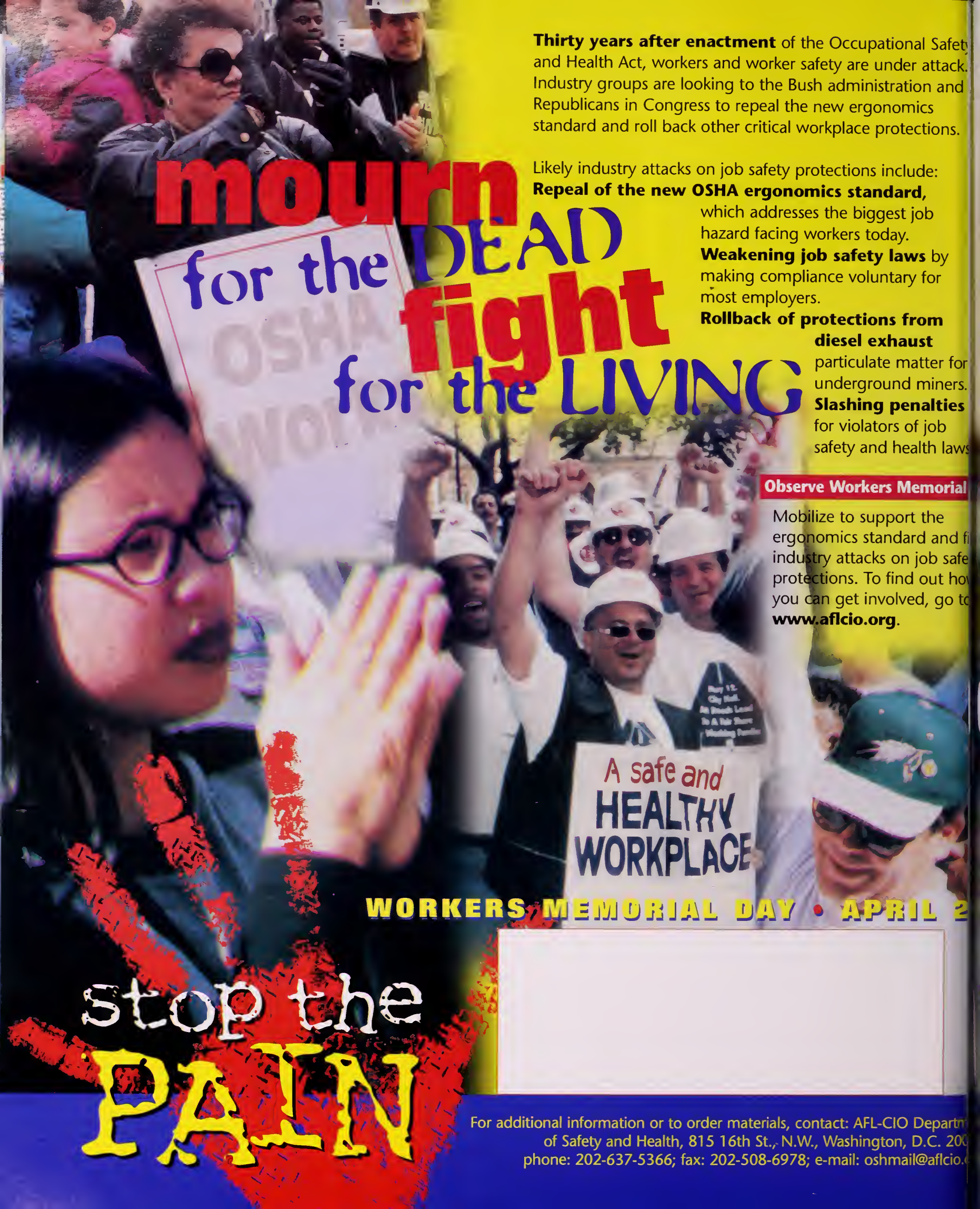
## WEBSIGHTING

**Point, Click, Buy Union Books.** Readers seeking a unionized bookstore now can order directly from Labyrinth Books, [www.labyrinthbooks.com](http://www.labyrinthbooks.com), where UNITE Local 169 in New York City recently organized 26 workers at the bookseller's stores and warehouses. Its website, which lists new releases by topic, enables users to place special orders and search for any of the 125,000 titles the company offers. Instructors can provide course textbook lists online and the company makes the books available for students. Labyrinth joins Powell's Books in Portland, Ore., [www.powells.com](http://www.powells.com), as a union-friendly Internet shopping option. Powell's workers are members of International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 5. @

## POSTER

**"¡Lo Establece La Ley!"** is the Spanish version of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's poster, "It's The Law!" which describes workers' right to safe workplaces. The poster also lists contact information for OSHA, including its website: [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov). The free 12.5-inch-by-17.5-inch poster can be downloaded from [www.osha.gov/oshpubs/poster2.html](http://www.osha.gov/oshpubs/poster2.html) or ordered by calling 202-693-1888; or via Internet at: [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov). @





**Thirty years after enactment** of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, workers and worker safety are under attack. Industry groups are looking to the Bush administration and Republicans in Congress to repeal the new ergonomics standard and roll back other critical workplace protections.

Likely industry attacks on job safety protections include:

**Repeal of the new OSHA ergonomics standard,**

which addresses the biggest job hazard facing workers today.

**Weakening job safety laws** by making compliance voluntary for most employers.

**Rollback of protections from diesel exhaust**

particulate matter for underground miners.

**Slashing penalties** for violators of job safety and health laws

# mourn for the DEAD fight for the LIVING

## Observe Workers Memorial

Mobilize to support the ergonomics standard and fight industry attacks on job safety protections. To find out how you can get involved, go to [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org).

A safe and  
**HEALTHY  
WORKPLACE**

**WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY • APRIL 2**

stop the  
**PAIN**

For additional information or to order materials, contact: AFL-CIO Department of Safety and Health, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004  
phone: 202-637-5366; fax: 202-508-6978; e-mail: [oshmail@aflcio.org](mailto:oshmail@aflcio.org)



Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

APRIL 2001

# America @work

**Corporate  
Greed**  
**vs.**  
**Public  
Good**

**ALSO INSIDE:**  
**The Branding  
of America**  
**Holding  
Corporations  
Accountable**  
**Working at  
Wal-Mart**





**"I JUST WANTED** to say how much I appreciate every man and woman of every union within the AFL-CIO. When I ran for [Texas] state representative last year, unions really came through for me. I was supported and assisted by the Teamsters, UAW...the Texas State Fire Fighters Association, the Mesquite and Garland Fire Fighters Associations...[and] retired union members. I will always work hard to look after the interests of working men and women. God bless each of you."—*State Rep. Bruce Scott Archer, Mesquite, Texas*

### SAY WHAT?

**How is your union fighting against corporate irresponsibility to help workers get a voice at work?**

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's Say What? Selected responses will appear in a future issue. [America@work](mailto:America@work), 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; phone: 202-637-5010; fax: 202-508-6908; e-mail: [atwork@afcio.org](mailto:atwork@afcio.org).

### HERE'S WHAT YOU SAY

**ABOUT WHAT ISSUES YOUR UNION IS PLANNING TO PROMOTE AS PART OF THE RESPECT WORK, STRENGTHEN FAMILY CAMPAIGN:**

"In an era of rising health care costs and the recent trend of public employers attempting to pass...health cost increases on to working families, our union is holding the line in all of its...bargaining units to prevent this. [We] recently teamed up with nine other unions and formed a coalition to increase [our] lobbying power....Local 17 is also working for...legislated paid family leave and mental health care coverage that is comparable to physical health care coverage. Local 17 is a union of 8,000 public-sector professionals across the State of Washington."—*Taryn Gerhardt, communications director, International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers Local 17, Seattle*

**"THE RECENT CRUEL** and tragic death of this nation's ergonomics standard, plotted...by the Republican congressional cronies of Big Business, is an outrage. It is an insult to every...hardworking American, and a slap in the face to those of us who live with the pain of these injuries...I have sent messages of appreciation to those legislators who truly represented the people on this issue...To those who sided with the smirking CEO's and business lobbyists...and [the] outright lies of the manufacturers' associations and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, I sent a quite different message. How can they dismantle, with no small amount of glee, a set of rules designed to help prevent hundreds of thousands of painful and even disabling injuries...and still...face the folks back home?"—*Frank Lehn, retired (and disabled), AWPPW Local 5, Camas, Wash.*

**"I THINK THAT** the election of George W. Bush was a fraud. His policies are bankrupt and his programs serve only the wealthiest of the wealthy....We must fight his program of exclusion and disenfranchisement...[and] stop the unfair economic program of trillion-dollar, across-the-board tax breaks....We must remember that the power comes from the people and I urge you to keep up the fight for us."—*David Minges, Gastonia, N.C.*

**"VEHICLES AND DRIVERS** crossing the Mexican and Canadian borders must meet *nothing less than U.S.A.* safety standards. There can be no compromise on this."—*William A. Pauwels Sr., Franklin Lakes, N.J.*

**AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in [America@work](mailto:America@work).**



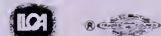
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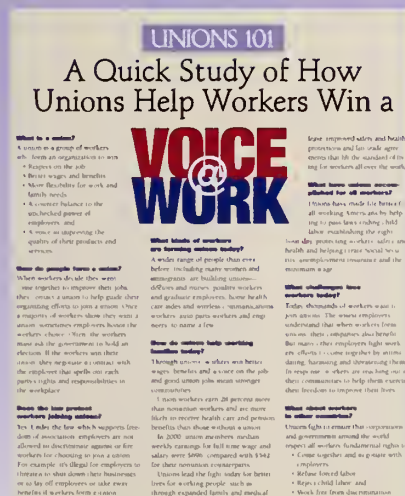
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Bush and Congress killed the nation's first federal workplace ergonomics standard



# ASK A WORKING WOMAN

## Survey 2001

The AFL-CIO Working Women's Department launched its Ask a Working Woman 2001 survey March 8, International Women's Day, to determine the top concerns of working women. The yearlong survey is available online at [www.aflcio.org/women](http://www.aflcio.org/women) and will be distributed through union publications and websites and by community partners. Survey results will help shape union priorities on behalf of all working women—approximately one-third of respondents to the department's past two surveys were not union members. Efforts resulting from the previous

surveys include support for campaigns for equal pay and paid family leave legislation.

This year, topics new to the survey—being distributed internationally for the first time through labor federations in 30 countries—include effects of the globalization of the economy and workers' rights to organize, free from employer interference, for a voice at work.

"It's great that the AFL-CIO is asking women what's important to them on an international scale," says Ellen Bravo, executive Director of 9to5, National Association of Working Women.

Survey respondents who identify themselves will receive a colorful Ask a Working Woman refrigerator magnet. For more information about the survey or to receive a copy, contact the AFL-CIO Working Women's Department at 202-637-5064. @



[www.aflcio.org/women](http://www.aflcio.org/women) • 1-888-971-9797

## Unions Battle State Legislative Attacks



**Not OK:** Steelworkers Vice President Leon Lynch leads a rally in Oklahoma to protest a so-called right to work bill that's moving through the state legislature.

Union activists are working in more than 30 states to defeat paycheck deception legislation and "right to work" (limited workplace rights) proposals designed to silence working families' voices.

So-called paycheck protection proposals typically would require a union to secure advance authorization from each member and represented nonmember before the union could apply his or her dues or fees to political and legislative spending, and to reduce the dues or fees of members and nonmembers who don't provide that individual authorization. But such measures are thinly veiled attempts to weaken the role of working families and their unions in the political process. Union members strongly support their unions' involvement in legislative and political action, according to independent surveys, and those who object

already have the right to opt out under current law. But by imposing the burdensome process of collecting approvals one by one, such laws would seriously limit unions' ability to speak for working families in the political and legislative process.

Paycheck deception bills were defeated in North Dakota, Mississippi and South Dakota in February, but similar legislation passed in Utah, where a court challenge is pending.

In Florida, Gov. Jeb Bush (R) is punishing unions for demanding a fair recount in the presidential election and has added language to AFSCME state employees' three-year contract, now in negotiation, that would ban the use of dues for political action.

"This isn't an issue that affects just public employees, but all union workers in Florida; because they could be next," says Florida AFL-CIO President Marilyn Lenard.

Paycheck deception bills have emerged in Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico and West Virginia. Union leaders say bills also are expected in Oklahoma and Florida, and ballot initiatives may surface in California, Oregon and Washington.

Elsewhere, union activists are battling so-called right to work legislation. The U.S. Census Bureau has found in states in which such legislation is in place, workers earn on average \$4,880 less than those in states where workers are free to join unions. While Gov. Thomas Vilsack has vetoed such a bill in Iowa, working families face a tough fight in Oklahoma, where Republican Gov. Frank Keating supports right to work legislation introduced in the legislature. Similar bills have been introduced in Connecticut, Colorado, Hawaii, New Hampshire, New Mexico and West Virginia, with a related bill surfacing in South Carolina. Legislation is expected in Alaska and ballot initiatives are expected in Oklahoma and Washington.

Visit [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org) for updates. @

## Organizing Organizers

A unique job fair at Asnuntuck Community College in Enfield, Conn., last month sought to recruit union organizers in Connecticut and Massachusetts in conjunction with the college's "Celebration of Labor" festival. "We need more organizers because we need to organize for more strength" for working families and their communities, says Pilar Schiavo, a UAW Local 2322 member. Schiavo, who helped organize the job fair, is a graduate student in labor studies at nearby University of Massachusetts at Amherst. For more information, call 860-253-3102. @



# AIRLINE WORKERS SEEK FAIR MERGERS

**U**nions representing airline employees are seeking guarantees that workers do not pay the price of two proposed airline mergers.

The Machinists filed objections after the bankruptcy judge approved the sale of Trans World Airlines to rival American Airlines. American is seeking to delete portions of the union's collective bargaining contract with TWA. IAM, which represents TWA's 16,000 flight attendants, ground crews, mechanics and gate agents, requested meetings with American and TWA to discuss strategies to protect members' jobs in the sale.

"We are not interested in complicating an already complicated deal any further," says IAM Vice President Robert Roach Jr. "But we must have guarantees that our members at TWA will not be unfairly penalized by the terms of American's

proposal." Other unions involved in the merger include the Transport Workers and the Air Line Pilots.

Meanwhile, the Flight Attendants and IAM are mobilizing to fight the planned merger of United Airlines and US Airways.

AFA, which represents flight attendants for both airlines, took a strike vote and promised to walk out if members do not receive a pay raise. United is demanding the union drop a provision in its contract that requires the company to put 10,000 US Airways flight attendants on United's seniority list.

The IAM, which represents 45,000 mechanics and ground agents at United, has not had a contract for more than a year and is seeking a fair deal before it approves the merger.

The Air Line Pilots and the Communications Workers of America also have members who work at the two airlines. @

## April 15: NO FEAR

**A** group of five AFSCME public policy staffers made tax time less taxing this year for low-wage workers.

Galvanized by the department's associate director, Ann Kempfski, the AFSCME activists became volunteer tax preparers after completing a short training program at the Internal Revenue Service. They fanned out from Washington, D.C., to New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland this year to help nursing home and home health care workers fill out their tax returns—a free service that provided a welcome alternative to storefront tax preparation agencies that charge high fees.

"We thought this would be a great way to bring people into the union hall and help them identify the union as a place they can go to get help,"

says Kempfski. The volunteers kept an eye out for workers who would benefit from the Earned Income Tax Credit, the federal refundable tax credit for low-income families. Kempfski envisions local staff and member-activists replicating the program across the nation and using it as an effective organizing tool.

The AFSCME volunteers used the workbook *Helping Workers Boost Their Paychecks: A Guide to Earned Income Credit Outreach Strategies*, published by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, which is available at [www.cbpp.org/eic2000/index.html](http://www.cbpp.org/eic2000/index.html) or by calling 202-408-1080. @

## SPOTLIGHT

### 7 Days to Victory

**N**early two years ago, union activists in Savannah, Ga., convinced the city council to support a resolution backing workers' freedom to organize for a voice at work. The proclamation was part of *7 Days in June*, the AFL-CIO's week-long series of actions to shine a light on the struggles workers face when they try to form unions.

The Savannah declaration was no symbolic gesture: On March 8, the city council voted 7-2 to recognize 800 city workers seeking to join SEIU Local 1985. The move was an historic first for public-sector workers in a "right to work" state. Although state law prohibits collective bargaining in Georgia, the city workers now have a grievance procedure, the ability to meet and confer with managers and authority to ask that union dues be deducted from their paychecks. A strong majority of workers signed cards saying they want a union.

Seeking to gain respect on the job, the workers reached out to community and religious leaders, including the Rev. Joseph Lowery, a founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. By Feb. 22, community supporters and members of the Savannah and Vicinity AFL-CIO Trades and Labor Assembly and the Atlanta Labor Council turned out in force at a council meeting to stand strong with the workers.

The organizing effort also strengthened the labor council. "We now have a union movement speaking in one voice," says Hulme. "Working together all the way was great," says Katie Foster, executive director of Local 1985. "That's going to be the trend."

Early support came from two city council representatives who are union members, including Pete Liakakis, a member of Carpenters Local 256. Edna Jackson, an SEIU Local 1985 member, won her seat in December 1999 by a 70-vote margin, in large part because of the labor council's get-out-the-vote campaign.

*7 Days in June* this year is June 9-16. For more information, call Enid Eckstein at 617-557-5488, ext. 4, or visit [www.aflcio.org/voiceatwork](http://www.aflcio.org/voiceatwork). @



**Unity:** The Rev. Joseph Lowery (red shirt) joins supporters in a Unity March two hours before the Savannah City Council voted to recognize 800 city workers as SEIU Local 1985 members.





Global rights: AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka joins participants in a conference on protecting workers' rights in today's global economy.

## GLOBAL FAIRNESS IN ACTION

Speakers at a recent world conference in Washington, D.C., reiterated a key theme: Protecting workers' rights in today's global economy is critical to creating equitable and sustainable growth throughout the world.

"Rules that protect people—core labor rights—are not a deterrent to sustainable growth. We believe there can be no sustainable growth without them," AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka told 200 participants—including students, union members, diplomats, ambassadors and journalists—at the Development, Democracy and Workers' Rights Conference Feb. 23–24.

Sponsored by the AFL-CIO and American University's Washington College of Law, the conference explored ways in which the union movement can broaden its global fairness activities to encompass workers' rights and development and reduce the growing disparities between the wealthy and the poor.

Providing economic growth and protecting workers also will be the focus of trade unions as they mobilize for several high-level global meetings this month.

The AFL-CIO, affiliated unions and activists will carry the call for workers' rights and environmental protection to Buenos Aires April 4–6, when trade ministers from the Western Hemisphere meet to discuss the Free Trade Area of the Americas, which could expand the North American Free Trade Agreement throughout the entire Western Hemisphere.

Union members and allies will take that same message to Quebec, Canada, as trade ministers and heads of state from 34 nations meet the week of April 16.

After the Quebec meeting, ORIT, the Western Hemisphere affiliate of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, will meet in Washington, D.C., April 23–26. The group likely will elect AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson president and reinforce the demand that trade agreements include worker and environmental protections. ☐

## Women Fighting Poverty

While 21 percent of working men earn poverty-level wages, fully 34 percent of women workers try to make ends meet with substandard earnings, according to the Economic Policy Institute. Union women and their allies addressed this issue at the annual Women Fighting Poverty conference in New York City, co-sponsored by the advocacy group Women in Need. Participants at the March 24 event discussed union organizing, sweatshops, sexual harassment, affordable housing and equal pay, among other topics.

UAW, AFSCME District Council 1707, UNITE's Northeast Regional Joint Board, Communications Workers of America District 1 and Health & Human Service Employees Union, 1199/SEIU co-sponsored the event with religious, community and civil rights groups. "This is a broad coalition of union, community and women's organizations all coming together around one issue," says Julie Kushner, sub-regional director of UAW Region 9A.

For a report summarizing the conference and listing contact information for the sponsoring organizations, fax a request to 212-662-2385 or write to Patricia Sparks, 160 W. 95th St., No. 6B, New York, N.Y. 10025, after July 1. ☐

## Labor Ready, Strike Two

For the second time in a little more than a month, a state audit revealed irregularities in the workers' compensation practices of Labor Ready, the nation's largest construction labor temp agency. According to a recent audit by Washington State, Labor Ready misclassified workers as holding less risky jobs—which enabled the company to pay two-thirds less in workers' compensation premiums to the state.

In February, Washington's Department of Labor and Industries' audit reported that the firm had classified workers as "ground maintenance workers," meaning Labor Ready paid only a 40-cent-an-hour premium to the state's workers' compensation fund. Those workers, the audit said, should have been classified as "construction site clean-up" workers, with a \$1.20-an-hour premium. As a result, Labor Ready owes \$734,000 in premium payments, penalties and interest according to the *Seattle Times*, and the state plans to launch an investigation into 1999 and 2000 records.

"Given the company's atrocious workplace safety record and the fact the audit was of only one state over the period of one year (1998), we think this fine will prove to be the tip of the iceberg of Labor Ready's workers' compensation problems," says Rick Bender, president of the Washington State Labor Council.

The Washington investigation and a January Ohio audit were prompted by an October 2000 report by the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department alleging such practices. BCTD is urging all states to audit Labor Ready. "It's clear that the other states should examine their workers' compensation systems to make sure that Labor Ready is in compliance," says BCTD President Edward C. Sullivan.

For information on Labor Ready and the fight of temporary workers to win a permanent voice at work, visit [www.building-trades.org/raiseroof/roof.temp.html](http://www.building-trades.org/raiseroof/roof.temp.html). ☐

TEMP WORKERS Deserve a



Permanent **VOICE@WORK**  
BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES DEPARTMENT, AFL-CIO



## HERE'S WHAT'S HAPPENING

• The AFL-CIO constituency group Pride At Work is holding its fourth biennial convention under the theme "Out and Organizing Globally." The June 21–24 meeting in Everett, Wash., will address workplace issues facing gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender workers. For more information or a registration form, visit [www.prideatwork.org](http://www.prideatwork.org) or call 202-637-5014.



• The 2001 AFL-CIO Union-Industries Show in Los Angeles April 27–30 will host the largest "Made in USA" exhibition of union workers' skills and services in the newly renovated, 100 percent union-built and -operated Los Angeles Convention Center. Free. Show hours are noon

to 8 p.m., April 27, and 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., April 28–30.

For more information, visit [www.unionlabel.org](http://www.unionlabel.org).

• Unions are planning activities for this year's *7 Days in June*—June 9–16—to fight back against employers' tactics aimed at coercing and intimidating workers who want to join a union. Last year, workers held nearly 200 events in 40 states. Find out how you can hold a *7 Days in June* event by calling Enid Eckstein at 617-557-5488, ext. 4, or visiting [www.aflcio.org/voiceatwork](http://www.aflcio.org/voiceatwork). @

## TWU Workers Trained for Excellence

The Acela Express, Amtrak's new, high-speed passenger rail service for the Northeast, draws its name (pronounced Ah-cell-ah) from the combination of "acceleration" and "excellence," with Transport Workers providing the excellence in service—TWU locals 1460, 2054 and 2001 members maintain, clean and

staff the 150-mph "bullet" trains.

Amtrak plans to have 20 of the high-speed trains running between Washington, D.C., New York and Boston by fall—but union members have been on board long before the passengers, providing design input and traveling to Europe to assess similar trains there. The result for business passengers is a "high-speed office," featuring 32 conference table seating arrangements, electrical outlets for laptop computers, a pub-style café car with beer on tap and an upscale food selection.

"The Acela is a brand new workplace that is bright, cheerful and safe," says Barry Twomey, secretary-treasurer of Local 1460. "The realization of good jobs with good wages and optimum conditions is now within our grasp." @



On board: TWU Local 2054 member Bob Bates inspects the new Acela Express.

## OUT FRONT

The Bush administration has announced it will create an office of the 21st Century Workforce. In his short time in office, President George W. Bush already has given us a graphic view of how he thinks a 21st century workforce should look and how its workers should behave.

We should suffer silently when our bodies are broken by heavy lifting, repetitive motion and poorly designed jobs so our employers won't be inconvenienced by an ergonomics standard.

We should welcome a paltry tax cut and forfeit our historic chance to invest in schools and health care and strengthen Social Security and Medicare—all so the wealthy can reap huge tax breaks.

We should gracefully give up the "security" that makes Social Security the nation's most important family program so investment moguls can profit from the risky investment of Social Security funds in the stock market.

We should let our children's public schools crumble while approving the diversion of desperately needed public education funds to voucher programs that benefit few.

We should be happy to work below community wage standards on construction projects supported by federal dollars so our employers can pocket higher profits.

We should be glad to see our federal tax dollars go to law-breaking corporate contractors so outlaw companies don't suffer the consequences of their behavior.

The signals are clear: the president will accommodate his Big Business and wealthy campaign contributors by using every means at his disposal to weaken the power of working families and our unions.

And we must use every means available to us to counter his assault.

We must spare no opportunity to tell the story of what this president is attempting to do—and the severe consequences all working families face if his crusade succeeds. We must use his attacks to grow stronger and more unified. We must hold every member of Congress accountable for every single anti-worker vote he or she casts. We must mobilize more and more workers and allies in the women's, religious, civil rights, child advocacy and environmental communities for the fight.

And, most importantly, we must put the energy and resources it takes into enabling more and more workers to organize for a voice at work to improve their families' lives and build the strong movement we need to repel threats and win real gains.

I call on every union, every local, every state and local labor council and every ally to join in this battle for America's values and future. @

## Bush's Attack on Working Families



BY JOHN J. SWEENEY



*The Mind of the C.E.O.*, author Jeffrey Garten quotes media mogul Rupert Murdoch as saying virtually all CEOs, including himself, expand their businesses with little or no consideration for anything else. In Murdoch's words, "the market rules."

But when it comes to corporate greed vs. public good, the American public sees it differently.

A *Business Week*/Harris Poll survey last year found an overwhelming 95 percent of respondents think U.S. corporations "owe something to their workers and the communities in which they operate," and "should sometimes sacrifice some profit for the sake of making things better for their workers and communities" (page 22).

But all too often, corporate responsibility—to employees, communities and consumers—falls far short. As a longtime Wal-Mart employee, Betty Fought took her responsibilities so seriously she brought her own towels to wipe out shopping carts filled with the contents of dirty baby diapers—and laundered the towels at home each night. Yet when Fought was injured on the job and sought workers' compensation, Wal-Mart refused to pay (page 9). Fought's dehumanizing experience is not an isolated event—as author Barbara Ehrenreich describes in her first-person account as a Wal-Mart worker (page 13).

Across the country, those who suffer from such work-related repetitive stress injuries as carpal tunnel syndrome had the door to a comprehensive ergonomics law slammed in their faces. Bought out by Big Business, Congress in March rammed through a bill to kill the nation's first federal ergonomics standard, in place for less than two months, (page 23).

Meanwhile, such giant corporations as Wal-Mart, J.C. Penney Co., Nike and many others routinely purchase goods made in countries where workers like 17-year-old Jasmín Díaz (page 18) suffer in sweatshop like conditions—while marketing their brands as "all-American." The "branding" of America and, increasingly the world, is not an accidental phenomenon, as author Thomas Frank shows (page 16). Rather, it is a conscious effort by corporations to co-opt cultures and even social justice movements to maximize profits by substituting hollow logos for genuine citizenship.

Yet, across the nation, students as young as grade school and high school are taking action to hold corporations responsible. Some, including 16-year-old Emma Roderick (page 19), intend to keep fighting until they "get rid of sweatshops and all other injustices in the world."

Together with their communities, union members are shining a light on corporate behavior as workers are winning a voice at work with their unions—creating vibrant neighborhoods and ensuring a strong future for their families (page 20). In city after city, union members are joining with their allies to forge strong alliances and challenge a greed-first, "market rules" mindset with a vision in which corporate citizenship is more than an empty slogan.

—Tula Conner  
Editor



**Stiffed:** Betty Fought, a loyal Wal-Mart worker, had to wage a tough fight to get workers' compensation after she was injured on the job.

JIM LEVITT/IMPACT VISUALS



# Where America



**Behind the yellow smiley-face of the all-American Wal-Mart myth is a company that is the largest foreign importer in the nation, where workplace policies may mean workers need two jobs and depend upon public support to get by**

BY JANE BIRNBAUM

# Shops

## Betty Fought

loved her job as a Wal-Mart greeter, one of the smiling employees who welcome shoppers in the nearly 3,000 U.S. stores of the world's largest retailer. Working

full-time again at 60 after strokes disabled her husband Edward, an electrician, Fought twice stopped suspected shoplifters at the Aberdeen, Wash., store. She personally supplied and washed the towels she used to wipe carts in which

some customers had carelessly diapered their babies.

But when Fought fell while pushing carts and became disabled, managers for Wal-Mart—the nation's largest private employer, founded in 1962 in Rogers, Ark., by retailing titan Sam Walton—stopped being so friendly. The Foughts waited so long for workers' compensation they had to take out a second mortgage which, along with other bills, at one point left them living on \$18 a month.

"It was a surprise the way they treated me," 66-year-old Fought says today. She had to go to court to win workers' compensation. Then, according to her lawyer, Wayne Lieb—a leader among Washington State workers' compensation lawyers—Wal-Mart arbitrarily stopped payments more than three months before her state pension kicked in this year, again leaving the couple without income. "You see how Wal-Mart advertises care and concern for people," Fought says. "But the minute I needed disability, there was a fight. They were hypocritical—treating people the way they treated me is not Wal-Mart's image."

Experiences like Fought's led Washington State last December to take the unprecedented step of decertifying Wal-Mart's self-insured workers' compensation program. (Wal-Mart has appealed the ruling and is managing its program with state supervision.) As a greeter, Fought personified Wal-Mart's caring image—yet her actual experience is just one of many events illuminating the distance between Wal-Mart's image and what it really means to work for Wal-Mart, shop at it and live near it.



# Corporate Greed vs. Public Good

In 1999 and 2000, a Cone Inc./Roper Poll survey rated Wal-Mart as the nation's top "good corporate citizen"—more a testament to savvy marketing than actual fact, says Robert Ross, sociology professor at Clark University. "People hold Wal-Mart in high regard because of its advertising that it delivers convenience and low prices," he says. "The happy face bounces around and they have this great gimmick of smiling retirees as you walk in and you can buy cheaper stuff there. Some consumers don't know the facts about Wal-Mart, and it's hard for the facts to get through, because people don't like paying attention to uncomfortable facts. And people who know just focus on the lower prices."

For those who care about "uncomfortable" facts, here are some about Wal-Mart.

## All-American foreign importer?

Wal-Mart stores often are festooned with red, white and blue bunting. Until 1998, store signs urged shoppers to "Buy American." But in 1999, Wal-Mart was the nation's largest importer, according to the *Journal of Commerce*, with 53 percent of its clothing coming from China, according to a *New York Times* story last year.

Kathie Lee Gifford, who has lent her name to Wal-Mart's "Kathie Lee" line of women's apparel, acknowledged in 1996 that pieces of her line had been made in a Honduran sweatshop by teenage girls. That same year, she pledged to have independent monitors inspect the factories where "Kathie Lee" goods were made. However, in 1997, her goods were found being manufactured in a New York sweatshop in which Chinese immigrants toiled 60 to 80 hours a week, some without pay. And Wal-Mart was found buying "Kathie Lee" handbags made in a sweatshop in China using forced labor as late as 1999, according to a *Business Week* investigation after a report from the National Labor Committee, a workers' rights group.

With more than \$193 billion in worldwide sales in 2000—52,100 pairs of women's jeans sold daily and 19,750 pairs of shoes hourly, according to *The New York Times*—Wal-



NATIONAL LABOR COMMITTEE

**Not made in USA: Family members hand food to workers at the Chentex plant in Nicaragua, where workers are locked behind enclosures throughout their workday.**

Mart is the nation's largest American company—and a leader in corporate scorched-earth practices, according to Charles Kernaghan, NLC executive director. "Wal-Mart is driving the race to the bottom by multinational corporations roaming the globe for lower labor costs," he says.

United Food and Commercial Workers President Douglas Dority agrees. "You have Wal-Mart, this mammoth retailer, lowering living standards worldwide by busting union efforts, intimidating workers, driving down wages and disobeying worker protection laws," he says. "We must make Wal-Mart respect workers and obey the law, or the company will lower living standards for all workers."

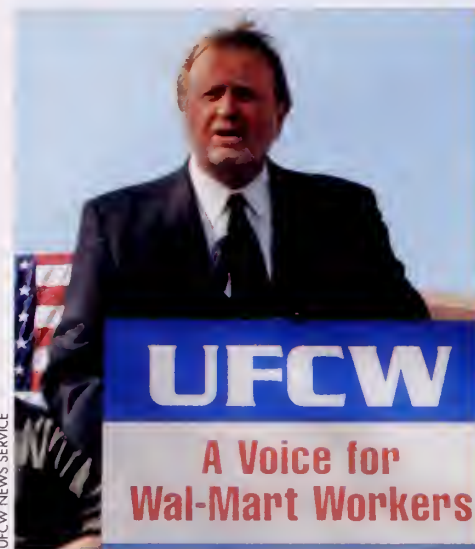
The NLC found and the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reported last year that in Managua, Nicaragua, Wal-Mart has been among retailers using the Chentex sweatshop to manufacture private-label goods. While Wal-Mart says it has a code of conduct guar-

anteeing workers' rights for anyone sewing Wal-Mart garments around the world, Chentex's Taiwanese owners fired in 2000 union leaders asking for raises for workers making less than \$5.30 a day for a 10-hour day, or less than 53 cents an hour.

With President George W. Bush promising on the campaign trail to "look South" and Congress last year enacting the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act, which extends to Caribbean and Central American nations no-tariff benefits similar to those under the North American Free Trade Agreement, this region is poised for an explosion of garment sweatshops, says Clark University's Ross. Central America is extremely convenient for retailers and it offers lower shipping costs than Asia.

But the region also is where union leaders, often women, routinely are threatened by employers, according to the Support Team International for Textileras, a network of women community and union organizers. Only such factory clients as Wal-Mart and the Bush administration, which the Walton family backed with huge campaign donations, can ensure workers are protected, Ross adds. (In the 2000 election cycle, Republican Party committees received \$100,000 from John Walton, \$81,000 from Jim Walton and \$10,000 from Alice Walton, the children of the deceased Sam Walton, while reaping another \$75,000 from the company and \$384,000 from other board members, according to Federal Election Commission filings.)

"With Caribbean Basin parity," Ross says, "the danger is that by using China as a whip, labor standards in Mexico and Central America will be driven even further



**"We must  
make Wal-Mart  
respect  
workers and  
obey the law."**

—UFCW President  
Douglas Dority



## Ethics Alert

Wal-Mart wants to hear from anyone who wants to report a personnel or business ethics issue or violation of Wal-Mart's vendor standards. Call 800-963-8442, and remember, the originating phone number of any call made to a toll-free number may be "captured." @

down by sweatshop owners competing with business from the big private-label retailers led by Wal-Mart."

### Does Wal-Mart enjoy corporate welfare?

Wal-Mart styles itself as deeply generous toward U.S. communities and families and in 2001, the Wal-Mart Foundation plans to give \$190 million in charitable contributions. Yet Sam Walton's widow and four children—who control nearly 40 percent of Wal-Mart stock, while son S. Robson Walton chairs and son John Walton sits on Wal-Mart's board—approve the actions of Wal-Mart's executives that set employee pay. But the wages approved by the Waltons—each of whom ties with Microsoft CEO Steven Ballmer as the seventh wealthiest Americans with assets of \$17 billion apiece, according to *Forbes* magazine—do not enable Wal-Mart's million-plus U.S. workers to support themselves, according to Marlene Richter. Richter is executive director of the Las Vegas chapter of the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice,

which supports efforts by UFCW Local 711 to help Wal-Mart workers organize in Las Vegas. (Wal-Mart workers in Las Vegas maintain their own website at [www.walmartworkerslv.com](http://www.walmartworkerslv.com).)

Twelve years ago, Arkansas state Rep. Jay Bradford, then a state senator, was asked by a constituent if he realized how many Wal-Mart workers were using Medicaid and other taxpayer-financed public assistance programs. "I brought that up in a speech, and it shot right up in the media that this little state senator challenged Wal-Mart on its compensation," Bradford recalls. "Now, it's common for retailers to employ part-timers with no benefits, but people were not accustomed to this back then, and Wal-Mart led the no-benefit scenario."

Today, through company manipulation of employees' work schedules and high costs of employee participation, approximately 60 percent of Wal-Mart's employees are not covered by the chain's health package, according to UFCW (see chart, page 15). In contrast, the national average for wholesale and retail workers ages 18 to 64 not covered by their employers' health insurance plans is 53 percent, according to the research group the Employee Benefit Research Institute.

Instead, Wal-Mart sends its bill to taxpayers, says David Blitzstein, UFCW negotiated benefits director. "During health care reform six years ago, we shared a study with Congress in which we found the cost-shift from Wal-Mart alone to other employers was \$1 billion a year."



**Coincidence? After meat cutters in a Texas Wal-Mart won a voice at work with UFCW last year, the chain chopped back the number of meat cutters it employs in stores, prompting UFCW to file ULP charges (see page 12).**

### A bad neighbor?

Living near a Wal-Mart can be dirty business. Software engineer Kimsey Fowler Jr. maintains a website ([www.seanet.com/~fowler/walmart.htm](http://www.seanet.com/~fowler/walmart.htm)) detailing the trials of his father, Kimsey Fowler Sr., a retired utility marketing manager, Wal-Mart shopper and shareholder. In 1988, a contractor for Wal-Mart chopped down a row of mature oak trees on private property between a new Wal-Mart lot and the elder Fowler's backyard in Dublin, Ga. After the store was built, neighbors had to protest before the contractor put up a chainlink fence to stop trash from Wal-Mart's parking lot from blowing into the subdivision and to deter the friends and family members of Wal-Mart shoppers from walking dogs in neighbors' gardens. But when the fence blew over, the contractor refused to replace it—and Wal-Mart wouldn't get involved.

"Wal-Mart managers just never answered me," says Fowler Sr. "I think a company should help out when they can, especially if they can afford it," he adds.

Says Fowler Jr.: "I believe Wal-Mart once was an honorable company when Sam Walton was alive, but since his death, a corporate attitude of greed has turned Wal-Mart into a bad neighbor who seems content to trash communities for the sake of fat profits."



**Living wage? Valerie Gonzales needs food stamps and emergency room health care to support her family while making \$7.79 an hour at Wal-Mart.**



# Corporate Greed vs. Public Good

## Customer care?

Wal-Mart's "associates"—the term the company uses to describe the store's clerks, stockers, cashiers and others—are told to greet customers who are within 10 feet of them. But when customers are physically assaulted in Wal-Mart parking lots, or are seriously injured and even killed by falling merchandise stocked high on Wal-Mart shelves, they or their families can wind up fighting Wal-Mart

lawyers in long litigation battles to get compensation for medical care and other damages. At first, loyal shoppers can't understand what's happening. "They all say, 'I can't believe Wal-Mart would do this to me,'" says Denver lawyer Jeffrey Hyman, who calls Wal-Mart "the most difficult corporate entity I've ever faced."

In January, CBS's "60 Minutes" reported on the bad behavior by Wal-Mart's lawyers. On the broadcast, Houston Judge Sharolyn Wood said Wal-Mart lawyers didn't play by the rules and "also hid and conducted themselves in a way to disguise and hide anyone getting at the truth." Wood sanctioned Wal-Mart for concealing evidence and being intentionally misleading, and the case quickly was settled. Another judge was quoted as saying, "Rarely has this court seen such a pattern of deliberate obfuscation, delay, misrepresentation and downright lying." To level the playing field, Lewis Laska, a Nashville, Tenn., attorney and legal publisher, maintains the website [www.wal-martlitigation.com](http://www.wal-martlitigation.com), where lawyers can purchase and share information specifically about Wal-Mart. "I'm trying to help small-town lawyers seek justice for their clients against a large corporation," Laska says.



## Wal-Mart workers: No voice at work

"In state after state, Wal-Mart has used every trick in the book to prevent workers from having a voice on the job," says

UFCW organizer Harold Embry. "They do everything that's within the law, and some things that are not."

Wal-Mart has made every effort to prevent UFCW organizers from contacting workers on the job, says UFCW attorney George Wiszynski. "Wal-Mart has consistently maintained policies saying they welcome outside groups,"

Wiszynski says. "But last summer, they put out a policy that says if a union shows up, you move them away." After the success of meat cutters in a Jacksonville, Texas, Wal-Mart in getting a voice at work with UFCW last year, the chain drastically reduced the number of meat cutters it employs in stores.

Although saying

"there is no serious dispute that Wal-Mart is opposed to unionization," and citing a 56-page Wal-Mart "Manager's Toolbox to Remaining Union Free," the NLRB's General Council office dismissed in March. UFCW charges that Wal-Mart switched to pre-packaged meat in response to the

union's effort to organize meat department workers. The UFCW is appealing.

At the same time, *Fortune* magazine—edited by John Huey, who co-wrote Sam Walton's 1992 best-selling autobiography, "Sam Walton: Made in America, My Story"—named Wal-Mart 80th of the country's 100 best companies for employees last year. It is an award that Wal-Mart "associates" find less than believable.

"The managers always are bragging about how much money Wal-Mart makes and now that Wal-Mart made the *Fortune* list of

best places to work, they brag about that," says Valerie Gonzales, 33, who works in the infant department of a Las Vegas Wal-Mart. "But if Wal-Mart is going to brag so much, it should have the decency to pay us so we don't have to work two jobs and can afford health insurance."

After nine months on the job, Gonzales makes \$7.79 an hour for a 35-hour week, a schedule the company cut back from 40 hours. Supporting five children while her fiancé undergoes job training, Gonzales had to forgo Wal-Mart health coverage after learning her share of the monthly premium was nearly \$200, with a \$350 annual deductible each for her and her children. If Gonzales or the children need care, they visit emergency rooms. To get by, she is applying for food stamps.

Gonzales supports efforts by UFCW Local 711 to organize the Las Vegas Wal-Marts because a union would be "an improvement," she says. The UFCW organizing effort in Las Vegas is part of a broad community coalition

led by the local chapter of the NICWJ, which has created a code of conduct asking Wal-Mart managers to allow workers to organize, provide them with affordable health care and treat them with dignity.

"The reason we support the union drive becomes more urgent every day," says NICWJ director Richter. "If Wal-Mart is going to pay substandard wages and benefits, then there's not going to be a reason for other retailers and grocery chains to keep union contracts if they can get away with lowering wages. We'll have a lower standard of living across the board in Las Vegas, and lose those good wages and benefits that allow workers to raise their families."

Standing in front of a Wal-Mart recently, Richter says she marveled that "people of all backgrounds poured into the store at 9 a.m."

"I was thinking, 'Do you have any idea what is going on behind those doors?'"





# Working at Wal-Mart

## Barbara Ehrenreich,

the author of 11 books and frequent contributor to *The Nation*, *Time*, *The New Republic* and *The Progressive*, wrote *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in Boom-time America* (Metropolitan Books, [www.henryholt.com](http://www.henryholt.com)), which will be published May 8. In *Nickel and Dimed*, Ehrenreich describes her experiences working in low-wage jobs employed as a hotel maid, nursing home aide and Wal-Mart sales clerk. Ehrenreich wrote the following for *America@work* based on her experience at Wal-Mart.



SIGRID ESTRADA

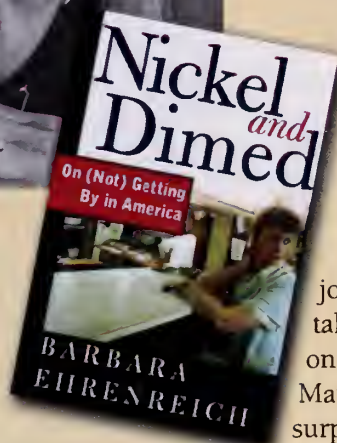
**Passing a urine test and personality profile will get you a job at Wal-Mart—where talking with co-workers is forbidden, unpaid overtime encouraged and health insurance unaffordable. All for \$7 an hour**

BY BARBARA EHRENREICH

In the early summer of 2000, I worked for three weeks at a Wal-Mart in the Twin Cities area. The idea was not to launch a whole new career—I'm perfectly happy being a journalist; in fact, it's because I'm a journalist that I decided to go out and get some first-hand experience of the low-wage work world. No doubt I could have found a more interesting, better-paying, entry-level job, but Wal-Mart intrigued me. It's the largest private employer in the United States, a major source of urban sprawl and a notorious union-buster. Or so I told myself as I sat in the parking lot of this vast gray, warehouse-shaped store, trying to work up the courage to present myself at the personnel department: Why not go straight for the belly of the beast?

Not everyone can get a job at Wal-Mart. You have to take a drug test and what I regard as an almost equally unwarranted invasion of privacy—a “personality test.” These are of course routine hurdles faced by

job applicants everywhere, and I'd even taken the Wal-Mart personality test once before, when applying for a job in Maine. This time, though, I was in for a surprise. When the personnel manager returned from “grading” my test on a computer, she announced that I'd gotten some answers “wrong.” I wanted to remind her that she'd told me before I took the test that there were “no right or wrong answers—just whatever you think,” but confined myself to a nervous grimace. What was wrong? Well, for example, given the statement that “rules have to be followed to the letter at all times,” I had agreed only “strongly” rather than “very strongly” or “totally,” and I had done so because I thought the last two choices would make me look like too much of a suck-up. Forced to explain myself, I muttered something about employees needing to use their own discretion now and then, which satisfied my interviewer. But the lesson I absorbed was that you can never be too much of a suck-up at Wal-Mart.



DAVID LEE WAITE



## Corporate Greed vs. Public Good

Tests passed—or at least rationalized—I sat back to wait for a job offer.

What I got instead was an order: “Your drug screen’s fine,” the personnel director told me cheerily over the phone, “and you’re due for orientation tomorrow at 3.” No mention of wages, benefits or hours—just the command that I show up on time. It took me a while to realize that these omissions were probably intended to make the job applicant grateful for whatever she gets: There’s no point in the hiring process in which you confront the potential employer as a free agent, entitled to cut your own deal. You’re just handed the application form and, a few days later, you’re handed a uniform. The insertion of the drug and personality tests between application and hiring tilts the playing field even further, establishing that you, and not the employer, are the one who has something to prove. Even in the tightest labor market—and it couldn’t get much tighter than it was in the Twin Cities in mid-2000—the person who has precious labor to sell can be made to feel one down, way down, like a supplicant with her hand stretched out.

For sheer grandeur, scale and intimidation value, I doubt if any corporate orientation exceeds that of Wal-Mart. The whole thing takes eight hours, some of which is devoted to the sorts of things that go on in any orientation, like filling out paperwork and absorbing company rules (in Wal-Mart’s case, no nose rings, dangling earrings, cussing, eating, blue jeans unless you’re willing to pay a \$1 fine, no “theft” of company time, etc.) But at Wal-Mart, an inordinate amount of time is devoted to company propaganda, to the point where I began to feel I was being inducted into a cult instead of a job. There was a 15-minute video on the history and philosophy of Wal-Mart, featuring a biography of its founder, retail guru Sam Walton. Another video instructed us to treat customers with “aggressive hospitality”

**“The real insult was the wages—\$7 an hour in my case. The St. Paul-based Jobs Now Coalition estimated that in 1997, a ‘living wage’ for a single parent supporting a single child in the Twin Cities metro area was \$11.77 an hour—and this was before rents shot up 23 percent in the first three months of the year”**

## Ducking Under the Red, White and Blue



**Made in USA: UNITE President Jay Mazur rallies with workers in Washington, D.C., to protest sweatshop conditions.**

**Wal-Mart** is not the only U.S. mass merchandiser to drape its image in Americana while buying goods from distinctly un-American sweatshops.

Numerous studies have noted the importance to consumers of “buying American.” A 1994 study by the International Mass Retail Association found 84 percent of the public either strongly or moderately prefers American products to those made overseas, and 64 percent would pay 10 percent more for U.S.-made goods versus comparable foreign goods.

So it’s no surprise to find sweatshop apparel with names and labels a world away from the foreign workers, mostly women, who have made them. There’s Wal-Mart’s “Faded Glory,” J.C. Penney’s “Arizona” line, Kohl’s “Sonoma” and “Cherokee” for Target.

“They’re selling you the image of the Wild West and rugged individualism in these names, but what they’re really selling is the brute exploitation of women and children,” says Charles Kernaghan, executive director of the National Labor Committee.

J.C. Penney bought apparel from the Daewoosa sweatshop in American Samoa, a U.S. Pacific territory in which investigators recently described some workers, mostly women brought from Vietnam, as “walking skeletons.” According to a U.S. Department of Labor report, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration had cited the company for an extremely rare violation: withholding food from workers. According to *The New York Times*, congressional investigators now are asking whether Daewoosa and several travel companies also violated federal law banning human trafficking. After a U.S. Department of Labor study made public last December, J.C. Penney stopped buying apparel from Daewoosa.

Yet, J.C. Penney has been joined by Target in attacking the settlement by other retailers, such as Tommy Hilfiger, Nordstrom and Calvin Klein, of lawsuits brought against them and factory owners in American Saipan, a U.S. commonwealth. One suit, brought by workers, anti-sweatshop activists and UNITE, charges the retailers, which labeled some clothes made in Saipan as “Made in USA,” with violating California state consumer protection laws.

“We’re the union that popularized the phrase ‘look for the union label,’ intended to assure consumers that goods are made under decent conditions,” says UNITE President Jay Mazur. “We’re appalled when companies label something ‘Made in USA’ when it was made under sweatshop conditions in a U.S. territory where workers do not even have the benefit of the U.S. minimum wage.” ☐

—Jane Birnbaum



and warned that we are responsible for serving them even on our breaks. Mixed in with all the warnings and detailed rules is the upbeat message that we, the “associates,” are the linchpin of the retail empire’s success. As it says on the back of the blue vests that serve as Wal-Mart uniforms: “Our People Make the Difference.”

Everything seemed friendly enough until we came to a 12-minute video “You’ve Picked a Great Place to Work,” in which various Wal-Mart “associates” testify to the “essential feeling of family for which Wal-Mart is so well-known”—leading up to the conclusion that the last thing we need is a union. Once, long ago, unions had a place in American society, the voice-over tells us, but they “no longer have much to offer workers,” which is why people are leaving them “by the droves.” Wal-Mart is booming; unions are declining: Judge for yourself.

But, we are warned, “unions have been targeting Wal-Mart for years.” Why? For the dues money, of course. Think of what you would lose with a union, the narrator advises: First, your dues money, which could be \$20 a month “and sometimes much more.” Second, you would lose “your voice” because the union would insist on doing your talking for you. Finally, you might lose even your wages and benefits, because they would all be “at risk on the bargaining table.” You have to wonder—and I imagine some of my 10 fellow orientees were doing so at the moment—why such fiends as union organizers, such outright extortionists, as they are depicted in the video, are allowed to roam free in the land.

The Monday after orientation, I showed up for my first day of work, expecting as a valued “associate” to spend at least one day in training. But no one seemed to be expecting me, and it even took a while to find someone to tell me where to go: ladies’ wear, as it turned out, where again no one seemed to know what to do with me. After several hours, and with some help from a distracted manager, I figured out what my job was—putting clothes that customers had tried on back in their places, in size and color order. There was a lesson, I eventually realized, in the indifference I experienced that first day: Despite all the glorification of “associates” in the orientation videos, employees are treated like a renewable resource—hardly worth the effort of serious training.

Working in ladies’ wear initially had sounded pretty genteel—I’d imagined myself dispensing fashion advice—but it turned out to be one of the most grueling jobs in the store. Customers fill whole shopping carts with clothes to try on, most of which are rejected and placed by the fitting room staff in fresh carts for associates to return to their places on the floor. So this is how we measured our workload—in carts. When I arrived for work, a co-worker would tell me how things had been going—“can you believe, eight carts this morning!”—and how many carts were awaiting me. At first, a cart would take me an average of 45 minutes, and there might still be three or four mystery items left at the bottom. I got this down to a half hour, and still the carts kept coming. Sometimes I was lucky just to achieve a steady state between replacing the returned clothes and picking up items customers had tossed randomly on the racks and the floor. If I picked up misplaced items as quickly as I replaced the returns, my cart never emptied, and things would back up dangerously at the fitting room, where someone was likely to hiss: “You’ve got three carts here, Barb. What’s the problem?” Think Sisyphus or the “Sorcerer’s Apprentice.”

The work was exhausting, for the most part pretty solitary and, once I got the hang of it, mind-numbingly repetitive and dull. But the real insult was the wages—\$7 an hour in my case. The St. Paul-based Jobs Now Coalition estimated that in 1997, a “living wage” for a single parent supporting a single child

in the Twin Cities metro area was \$11.77 an hour—and this was before the unprecedented rent inflation of 2000, which saw rents shoot up 23 percent in the first three months of the year. As I got to know more of my fellow employees, I learned that some of them held second or even third jobs. Many others were visibly poor in all the hard-to-miss, stereotypical ways. Crooked yellow teeth were one sign, inadequate footwear another. My feet would hurt after four hours of work, and I was wearing my comfortable old Reeboks, but a lot of women ran around all day in thin-soled moccasins.

But I didn’t realize how deep the poverty of my co-workers went until one day when I visited a local charity, curious to see how easy it would be to cop a little emergency food aid. The young social worker who interviewed me seemed shockingly absent-minded. “Do you have a car?” she asked. Yes, I had a car. And a couple of minutes later: “So you don’t have a car?” and so forth. At the end of the interview she apologized for forgetting almost everything I said about myself—that I was from out of state, lived in a residential motel, etc. She was mixing me up with someone else who worked at Wal-Mart, she explained, someone who had been in just a few days ago.

Why do people put up with such low wages, especially when there are better-paying jobs available? I decided the only thing to do was ask. At breaks and in moments “stolen” from work (chatting with co-workers was forbidden), I learned that some of

## Wal-Mart Medical Coverage

### Low Pay, Unaffordable Health Care

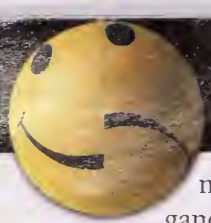
Average Hourly Wage	Coverage Option	Individual Deductible	Individual Coinsurance Maximum*	Family Deductible Maximum*	Family Coinsurance Maximum*
\$7.50	No Coverage	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
\$7.50	\$350 Deductible	\$350	\$1,750	\$1,050	\$3,500
\$7.50	\$500 Deductible	\$500	\$2,500	\$1,500	\$5,000
\$7.50	\$750 Deductible	\$750	\$3,750	\$2,250	\$7,500
\$7.50	\$1,000 Deductible	\$1,000	\$5,000	\$3,000	\$10,000

\* When benefits are reduced or paid at less than 80 percent (e.g. mental and nervous disorders, substance abuse and inpatient rehabilitation), the amount of money you pay toward eligible charges (your out-of-pocket expenses) does not apply to your coinsurance maximum.

Source: Wal-Mart “Associate Benefits Book.”



## Corporate Greed vs. Public Good



my fellow employees had indeed been taken in by the orientation propaganda. "When I saw those videos," one told me, "I felt really lucky to get this job." Others said they were trapped by transportation problems. Some rode bikes to work; those who had cars were inhibited from searching for a new job by the price of gas, which was running at nearly \$2 a gallon. And others simply voted with their feet, leading to relentlessly high turnover. "You can see for yourself there's a dozen new people coming in for orientation every night," one woman told me. Wal-Mart's appetite for human flesh is insatiable—we'd even been urged by management to try to recruit any Kmart employees we might happen to know.

Almost everyone was eager to talk to me, and I soon become a walking repository of complaints. About the health insurance plan, for example, which many people thought wasn't worth paying for. (The average Wal-Mart worker pays \$150 a month for health coverage and must pay a \$350 deductible per family member; see chart, p. 15.) About schedules, which, as in so many low-wage workplaces, workers have little or no control over. And always, there were the gripes about managers: the one who was known for sending new hires home in tears; the one whose habit it was to take a ruler and knock everything off of what was regarded as a messy shelf, so you would have to pick it up off the floor and start over. The most interesting complaint was that no one gets paid overtime at Wal-Mart, or so I was told, although there often is pressure to work it. After I left the job and returned to my real home, I did some research and found that, sure enough, Wal-Mart is facing class-action lawsuits for failure to pay overtime in 10 states, although a company spokesman I contacted denied any wrongdoing.



DAVID LEE WAITE

In my last week at Wal-Mart, I got a little reckless. I started using the forbidden word "union." I had nothing to lose, of course, and I was sick of listening to tales of hardship and misery without having anything constructive to say, like "You know what we need around here? We need a union." Sometimes I drew a blank, I suspect because the person I was talking to was scared or didn't have any notion of what a union is, other than what they'd been told in the anti-union orientation video. More often I got a vigorous nod and a fresh flow of complaints. One woman even gave me a clenched-fist salute.

I left thinking it won't be easy to organize Wal-Mart, with its cult like atmosphere and rabid union-busting policies. But I also left with the feeling that this huge organizing task should be seen as a patriotic priority: It's a crying shame that the biggest private employer in America is also one of the worst. @

# The of A

## Thomas Frank,

most recently author of *One Market Under God: Extreme Capitalism, Market Populism, and the End of Economic Democracy* (Doubleday, [www.randomhouse.com/doubleday](http://www.randomhouse.com/doubleday)), has written for *The Nation*, *Harper's* and many other U.S. and British publications. Based on his research for *One Market Under God*, Frank wrote the following for *America@work*, in which he describes the conscious corporate effort to repackage and market social movements and culture under the ubiquitous brand name.

The idea of a brand name—once a simple guarantee of quality—had by the 1990s taken on metaphysical qualities. Brands were now symbols for entire corporate cultures into which consumers could be enticed. Brands systematically could be built by nearly scientific processes, and as such the brand was thought to be the very bedrock of New Economic achievement. Companies could re-engineer themselves; entire industries could "outsource" themselves to the bone; whole workforces could be cut loose, chopped down into "units of one"; but the brand remained solid and unyielding despite it all. According to some, mankind had entered a new era in which the value of brands mattered far more than any aspect of material production.

There was only one drawback: Americans in the 1990s no longer fell for the naive pitches of the past. The big thinkers of the advertising industry spoke of advertising overkill: Too many ads in too many places, too intrusive and many obviously false or misleading. The leaders of the advertising industry spoke of crisis, of failure, of collapse.

One way out of the crisis was suggested by French adman Jean-Marie Dru in a



# Branding America

**"To establish a brand is to establish a tribe around the brand, a tangle of shared pleasures."**

—John Leland,  
writing in the  
*New York Times*  
Magazine

1996 book, *Disruption*. To succeed, Dru argued, brands had to come up with some way to be stridently, righteously liberationist, to identify and attack some social "convention" and to align themselves with some larger "vision" of human freedom. Brands must be "audacious," Dru wrote. They must be "made of dreams," qualities he illustrated with quotes from various figures of the historical left. And with the historical left virtually disappearing in the 1990s, a whole array of glamorous and unconventional cultural niches had been opened for corporate occupation. In the 1990s, we would have brands for social justice rather than movements.

No company had enjoyed more success at this strategy over the years than Nike, with its constant talk of "revolution," its ubiquitous swoosh and its creepy soft-totalitarian Nike Town shops in big cities. At the same time, no brand had been as reviled. In the wake of revelations about its labor practices, Nike had gone from signifying athletic excellence to symbolizing everything wrong with the "new economy": multimillionaire athletes and starvation wages in Indonesia.

Attending an advertising conference in 1998, I heard how in 1997 Nike went about fighting the dreaded "cynicism" tearing people and their brands apart. Two female ad execs from the Goodby Silverstein agency began their presentation by reminding us that "Nike has been stewing in a bit of negativity for the last couple of years," a "negativity" which now tainted even the coveted minds of teenagers. Taking a philosophical perspective and forgetting for the moment about a "soaring increase in sales," the two adwomen rolled up their sleeves and pre-



WENDY EDELBURG

BY THOMAS FRANK

pared to "address this negativity by reinjecting authenticity and credibility back into the brand."

What Nike needed to do was find a sport as distant as possible from its traditional advertising approach, discredited now with its excesses of money and celebrity. So, becoming convinced that women's basketball was a new world as yet unsullied by the market's touch, the two adwomen set about studying high school girls' basketball and packaging it into an elaborate pitch for the Nike brand. They told the audience how they embarked on an ethnographic fact-finding tour through the South, inner-city Philly and other regions where authenticity could be mined cheaply and plentifully.

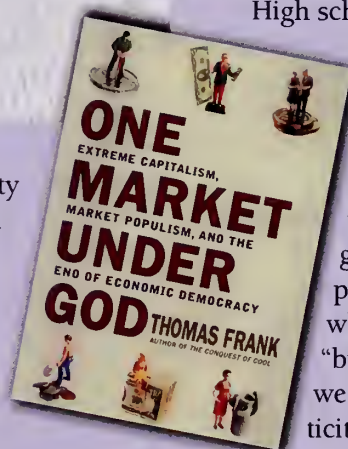
Somewhere, though, their scientific detachment became tourist like giddiness and they related with the enthusiasm of a post-vacation slide show how they encountered all manner of curious "rituals" among the girl athletes they found and how they came across "the most unselfconscious laughter you've ever heard." They played a recording of an exotic-sounding high school cheer and showed us black-and-white

photos of serious-looking teenagers staring past the camera like dust bowl farmers in a Dorothea Lange picture. And then they told us how they went about putting that authenticity to work for Nike.

High school league rules forbade the agency to film an actual high school team, so the agency invented a replica team to re-enact the love of sport the ad execs had witnessed on their tour. A group of high school-age girls was duly recruited and dispatched to basketball camp, where they were assigned to "build their own sisterhood that we could reflect with great authenticity." The squad was dubbed the "Charlestown Cougars" and we

watched the intentionally low budget-looking commercials that documented the Cougars' arduous, unsung road to fictitious state championship. The commercials stretched to push all our authenticity buttons: The timeless black-and-white imagery, the heroic slow-motion pan shots, women's voices humming church spirituals in the background. Consumers found all this authenticity convincing, we were told.

We heard of website hits and plaintive messages from real-life high school girls. But the campaign shouldn't be judged merely in terms of Nike sales, the adwomen told us, for the ads were much more than that. They were about "raising consciousness" as well. They worked not merely commercially, but "to build role models for young girls." The campaign "validated who they are in their sport." The audience of ad execs erupted in applause. ☐





# Jasmin and Emma:

**W**hile many 17-year-olds are finishing their last years of high school, Jasmin spends her days sewing sweatshirts for Nike. Her family desperately needs the \$35 she brings home every week, but Jasmin says the work conditions at the factory are inhumane.

"The pay is low and they give us rotten food to eat," says Jasmin. "My brother found worms in his."

Jasmin, who rises early to walk the two hours to the factory, works 10-hour days, five days a week, at Kukdong. Despite working more hours than Mexican law allows for child laborers 17 and younger, she has never seen a penny of overtime pay. Tired of the long hours, low wages and abusive supervisors, Jasmin and her co-workers decided recently to dump the company-controlled union and form one of their own.

To gain recognition for their union, Jasmin and her co-workers staged a one-day sit-down strike. When the company refused to negotiate, the workers extended the strike indefinitely and remained inside the factory. On the fourth day, state police violently evicted them from the factory, sending more than 15 workers to the hospital.

"I walked out with the other workers

*Making athletic apparel for Nike, Reebok and other U.S. companies at the Kukdong International factory in the state of Puebla, Mexico, Jasmin Díaz endures sweatshop conditions for subsistence pay. In January, Jasmin and 600 co-workers, mostly teenage girls, stood together and shut the factory down. Now, with the help of students in the United States, they continue to seek justice on the job.*

because of bad pay, bad food and a bad union," says Jasmin. "We formed our union so that we can defend our rights."

The Puebla state government denied any violence, saying the injured workers had tripped while running away from police. Meanwhile, Kukdong informed workers they had 72 hours to go back to work or resign—and those who stayed on strike would lose all rights to severance pay.

Most of the workers at Kukdong are just like Jasmin: poor girls from the country whose parents no longer can support their families through the traditional agricultural work of the region. Jasmin's father, Nicholas, has been unemployed for two years. Two of her brothers traveled to the United States to help support the family, while Jasmin and another brother took jobs with Kukdong.

Díaz says with the market flooded by cheap imports from such trade pacts as the North American Free Trade Agreement, local farmers like him can't compete or find work.

"I can't support my family planting

beans or peanuts or corn," says Díaz. "If it wasn't for my kids, how would things be for us? Bad, bad, bad!"

Many Kukdong workers live in one-room houses made of adobe, cinder blocks or even sticks and mud, according to David Ernesto Alvarado of the American Center for International Labor Solidarity, who works closely with the workers. It's not uncommon to find up to six people sharing a room, he says.

Workers such as Jasmin have found support from high school students like Emma Roderick (see story, page 19) and college students throughout the United States. The Worker Rights Consortium, an independent monitoring agency to which many universities belong, investigated Kukdong and discovered that factory conditions did not meet the standards students demand for manufacturers of their university clothes. In March, Nike's own factory-monitoring firm, Verite, confirmed that some managers harassed and abused workers, and that workers need more freedom to unionize.

In fact, the WRC report lists violations of Nike's own code of conduct, which governs workplace conditions in factories producing Nike apparel. While Nike prohibits its subcontractors from employing workers younger than 16, video footage made by workers shows a 15-year-old who works in the plant. Nike's code of conduct states subcontractors must follow local law regarding hours of work.

Under pressure from students and the WRC, Nike officials promised to work with Kukdong to ensure all employees could return to work safely. So far, 39 of the fired union leaders have been rehired, as have almost all of the other workers who were terminated. ☐

—Andrew Prediletto



Standing strong: Jasmin Díaz with her father, Nicholas, and mother, Ana Maria Alonzo.

"We formed our union so that we can defend our rights."



# Two Teens, One Bond

**D**ecember 1997: My mom comes into the living room, where I'm watching TV. "Emma, your dad and I are going to an anti-sweatshop rally at the Disney Store. Do you want to come?" I look out the window. It's raining. It's Saturday. "Nah, I think I'll stay home."

**December 1998:** Over dinner my mom says, "Tomorrow we're going to an anti-sweatshop vigil in Rockefeller Center. Do you want to come?" I shrug. "I'll see how much homework I have." I do go, but feel so shy in the crowd that I can barely chant.

**December 1999:** This time the conversation is different. "Emma, are you sure that you have to go to the vigil three hours early? How much do they have to brief you just to dress up as Winnie-the-Pooh and hand out fliers? Won't you have homework?" I roll my eyes. "Mom, would a 10-year-old sweatshop worker in Honduras accept that I couldn't work to end sweatshops because I had homework?! I mean, geez, let's get our priorities straight!"

**December 2000:** My parents are near the front of the crowd of 2,000. I'm at the podium, screaming, "Workers have rights and they deserve to be respected!" The crowd cheers. I help lead the chants.

A lot has changed.

True, I grew up in a progressive household, and yes, I am named after Emma Goldman. But because almost all the other adults I knew were like my parents, I thought that everyone was working against injustice and soon everything would be taken care of. It wasn't until junior high that I met people who defended sweatshops. Some of these people, it turned out, were my friends.

Around the time I realized that not

*Emma Roderick, a 10th-grade student at Hunter High School in New York City, is the daughter of Maxine Phillips, a member of the National Writers Union/UAW, and Tom Roderick, a former member of UFT/AFT. Emma shares with America@work her evolution into an anti-sweatshop activist advocating a wide range of social justice issues.*

everyone was on our side, an activist in my school put up signs for a march across the Brooklyn Bridge in memory of Amadou Diallo, the unarmed African immigrant who had been shot 41 times by the police.

My parents suggested that we go together. "I can't," I said. But instead of my usual excuses of too much homework or having to hang out with my friends, I had another reason. "I'm going with a group from my school." This was the first rally

More than 200 universities and colleges are in the United Students Against Sweatshop network, with thousands of high school and college students part of the fight for justice in USAS and other groups seeking social justice.

- National Labor Committee, 212-242-3002, [www.nlcnet.org](http://www.nlcnet.org).
- SCALE, <http://www.nlcnet.org/scale>.
- United States Student Association (USSA), 202-347-8772, [www.usstudents.org/cgi-bin/ussa](http://www.usstudents.org/cgi-bin/ussa), is the official voice for students in the nation's capital.
- MEChA, the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán, [www.azteca.net/aztec/mecha/index.shtml](http://www.azteca.net/aztec/mecha/index.shtml), is Web central for Latino and Latina students nationwide.
- The 2030 Center is a public policy organization and "action tank" for young workers, 202-822-6526 or 877-2030-ORG, [www.2030.org](http://www.2030.org).

NATIONAL LABOR COMMITTEE



Speaking out: Emma Roderick leading chants at anti-sweatshop rally in New York.

I had ever been part of without any coaxing from my parents. It marked a turning point, one I've described to friends as "the day I got my first rally high." When I came home from the rally, it was all I could talk about for days.

Also around that time, I began to volunteer at the National Labor Committee, stuffing envelopes and making photocopies, and on Tuesdays I began attending meetings of SCALE, the Student Committee Against Labor Exploitation, a group of high school students who meet in the NLC office. We plan anti-sweatshop actions and coordinate high school participation in the yearly December "Shop With a Conscience" vigil. We send speakers to assemblies and meetings at high schools around the city.

I love walking into SCALE meetings and knowing that every teenager there shares my anger against injustice, an anger fueled by love and a deep respect for sweatshop workers, an anger that propels us to make it to meetings even when we think we have too much homework or need more sleep. I've branched out to work with the anti-nuclear weapons movement, anti-death penalty groups and the movement against corporate-dominated globalization. Along with some activist friends, I've even started a high school group known as UNYFY (the Union of New York Free Youth), which tries to unite the youth movement to work together against all forms of injustice. I owe a lot of this to the support and skills I got at SCALE.

The movement needs all the help it can get, and I intend to keep fighting until we succeed in getting rid of sweatshops and all other injustices in the world. It's an uphill struggle, but it's worth it. @

*"I love walking into SCALE meetings and knowing that every teenager there shares my anger against injustice."*



# HOLDING CORPORATIONS ACCOUNTABLE

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

## AT NORTHWEST HOSPITAL

in Seattle, workers long had been frustrated with low wages and staffing levels they felt didn't adequately meet patients' needs, and turnover was high as workers sought family-supporting jobs at other health care facilities. When they tried to talk with managers about their concerns, workers say their voices weren't heard.

But in January, community support helped 755 workers at Northwest win a voice at work with SEIU District 1199NW in the largest private-sector union victory in Washington State since 1997. Many union members and supporters live in the community and use the hospital's services, so the King County Labor Council, Washington Citizen Action and other allies came together to form a neighborhood coalition, Northwest Neighbors for Fairness, to bolster the workers' effort. Lawmakers convinced the hospital to abide by a code of conduct for the election, including not hiring a union-buster and not holding captive-audience meetings.

"By improving working conditions, it will be easier to attract and maintain good workers and give better service to patients," Rep. Jim McDermott (D-Wash.) wrote to hospital President William Schneider.

County Council member Cynthia Sullivan says that supporting the workers was "a personal issue, because my two children were born at Northwest." Judy Billick, a secretary at the hospital's geropsychiatric ward, says community support buoyed the workers. "It was amazing the amount of support we got," she says. "I think it helped energize us about the campaign. The support helped the workers keep from feeling isolated."

Workers engaged in a similar struggle in New Jersey. Last year, when the 500 employees at the industrial ceramics firm

**With the help of community support, union members and leaders across the nation are holding corporations accountable—to their workers, their families and their communities. By joining with their allies to win a voice at work, employees are creating vibrant neighborhoods and ensuring a strong future for their families. Here are a few recent examples.**

Certech tried to win a union, workers say managers used the vicious intimidation techniques that had succeeded in earlier attempts to thwart the workers' efforts. But just as in Seattle, workers reached out to allies and won.

From the day organizers began handing out leaflets until the election three months later, Certech hired off-duty police officers to "protect" the workers. Managers asked UNITE organizers to leave in front of workers, followed workers into the bathroom to tell them they were taking too long and held a big raffle the day before the union election. They fired nine immigrant workers.

In March 2000, even though a strong majority of workers had signed union cards only a few weeks earlier, the union lost the election. But they decided to keep fighting by filing charges with the National Labor Relations Board.

The fired workers, meanwhile, took the lead in building support from union and community groups. "We needed support from every organization that was able to support us," says Hugo Alvarez, a fired worker who now has been reinstated. "Politicians, religious leaders and other workers would go to forums to explain why we were fighting and why we needed their support." The workers spoke at immigrants' rights conferences and labor councils and met with local clergy and elected officials. Organizers from UNITE's New York-New Jersey Regional Joint Board, headed by Bill Lee, and the Bergen County Central Trades and Labor Council reached out to community members, who mailed postcards to the company demanding it stop harassing workers and recognize the union.

On Dec. 18, after three weeks of NLRB hearings during which some 30 immigrant workers testified about intimidation and captive-audience meetings, the company agreed to recognize the union, reinstate some fired workers and provide back pay.

"Community support strengthened the workers," says Alvarez. "I learned how not to be afraid anymore." Today, Certech workers have a strong contract that includes higher wages, improved retirement benefits and respect on the job. ☐

COURTESY UNITE NEW YORK-NEW JERSEY REGIONAL JOINT BOARD



**Community@work:** Workers at Certech succeeded in joining UNITE after community allies helped thwart employer efforts to prevent them from winning a voice at work.



RICK RABER

**Work and community:** Seattle employees at Northwest Hospital won a voice at work with the help of a neighborhood coalition—an effort that ultimately will improve patient care for the community.

Unions can clip and use the Voice@Work flier on the following page to reach out to allies. It is also available to download from [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org).



## UNIONS 101

# A Quick Study of How Unions Help Workers Win a



### What is a union?

A union is a group of workers who form an organization to win:

- Respect on the job;
- Better wages and benefits;
- More flexibility for work and family needs;
- A counter-balance to the unchecked power of employers; and
- A voice in improving the quality of their products and services.

### How do people form a union?

When workers decide they want to come together to improve their jobs, they contact a union to help guide their organizing efforts to join a union. Once a majority of workers show they want a union, sometimes employers honor the workers' choice. Often, the workers must ask the government to hold an election. If the workers win their union, they negotiate a contract with the employer that spells out each party's rights and responsibilities in the workplace.

### Does the law protect workers joining unions?

Yes. Under the law, which supports freedom of association, employers are not allowed to discriminate against or fire workers for choosing to join a union. For example, it's illegal for employers to threaten to shut down their businesses or to lay off employees or take away benefits if workers form a union.

### What kinds of workers are forming unions today?

A wider range of people than ever before, including many women and immigrants, are building unions—doctors and nurses, poultry workers and graduate employees, home health care aides and wireless communications workers, auto parts workers and engineers, to name a few.

### How do unions help working families today?

Through unions, workers win better wages, benefits and a voice on the job—and good union jobs mean stronger communities.

Union workers earn 28 percent more than nonunion workers and are more likely to receive health care and pension benefits than those without a union.

In 2000, union members' median weekly earnings for full-time wage and salary were \$696, compared with \$542 for their nonunion counterparts.

Unions lead the fight today for better lives for working people, such as through expanded family and medical

leave, improved safety and health protections and fair trade agreements that lift the standard of living for workers all over the world.

### What have unions accomplished for all workers?

Unions have made life better for all working Americans by helping to pass laws ending child labor, establishing the eight-

hour day, protecting workers' safety and health and helping create Social Security, unemployment insurance and the minimum wage.

### What challenges face workers today?

Today, thousands of workers want to join unions. The wisest employers understand that when workers form unions, their companies also benefit. But many other employers fight workers' efforts to come together by intimidating, harassing and threatening them. In response, workers are reaching out to their communities to help them exercise their freedom to improve their lives.

### What about workers in other countries?

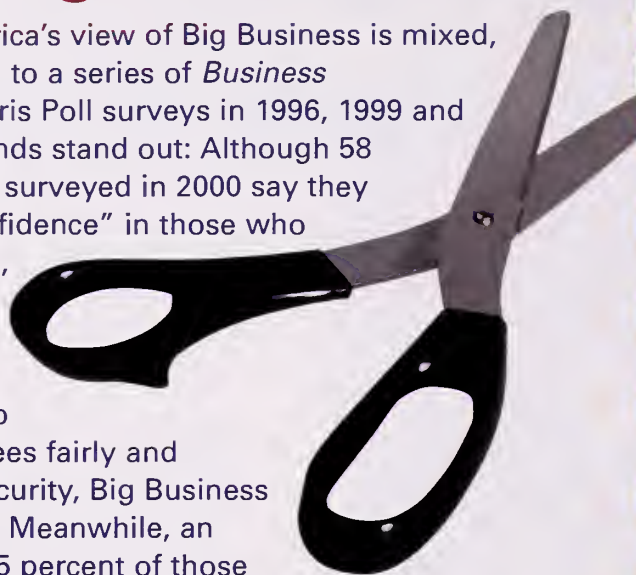
Unions fight to ensure that corporations and governments around the world respect *all* workers' fundamental rights to:

- Come together and negotiate with employers;
- Refuse forced labor;
- Reject child labor; and
- Work free from discrimination.



# Nobody's Business?

**W**hile America's view of Big Business is mixed, according to a series of *Business Week*/Harris Poll surveys in 1996, 1999 and 2000, certain trends stand out: Although 58 percent of those surveyed in 2000 say they have "some confidence" in those who run corporations, a large portion of respondents also say that when it comes to treating employees fairly and providing job security, Big Business rates "only fair." Meanwhile, an overwhelming 95 percent of those surveyed say U.S. corporations "owe something to their workers and the communities in which they operate." Yet when asked about the way specific industries serve their consumers, respondents give HMOs and tobacco companies a big thumbs down.



## Hold Corporations Responsible

Which of the following statements do you agree with more strongly?

Not sure/  
no answer—  
1 percent

4%

95%

U.S. corporations should have only one purpose—to make the most profit for their shareholders—and their pursuit of that goal will be best for America in the long run.

U.S. corporations should have more than one purpose. They also owe something to their workers and the communities in which they operate and they should sometimes sacrifice some profit for the sake of making things better for their workers and communities.

Source for all: Business Week/Harris Polls, Sept. 11, 2000

## Products Good, Employee Treatment Not So Good

How would you rate large U.S. companies on each of the following?

### Making good products and competing in a global economy

	Excellent/Pretty Good	Only Fair/Poor
2000	68 percent	31 percent

### Having fair and reasonable prices, relative to their profits

	Excellent/Pretty Good	Only Fair/Poor
2000	27 percent	69 percent

### Treating all of their employees well

	Excellent/Pretty Good	Only Fair/Poor
2000	31 percent	63 percent

### Providing job security for employees

	Excellent/Pretty Good	Only Fair/Poor
2000	32 percent	65 percent

Source for all: Business Week/Harris Polls, Sept. 11, 2000

Note: Totals don't add up to 100 percent

## Consumers Give Thumbs Down to Leading Industries



How would you rate these industries in serving their consumers?

	Poor	Pretty Fair	Pretty Good	Excellent
HMOs	43 percent	28 percent	15 percent	3 percent
Tobacco companies	43 percent	30 percent	14 percent	5 percent
Oil companies	39 percent	35 percent	16 percent	3 percent
Insurance companies	32 percent	41 percent	21 percent	3 percent

Source for all: Business Week/Harris Polls, Sept. 11, 2000

Note: Totals don't add up to 100 percent



# Bush's Big Kiss to Big Business

BY JANE BIRNBAUM

Nancy Foley, a member of UAW Local 2322 in Springfield, Mass., is a

reporter and copy editor who suffers from such severe repetitive stress injury that what little work she is able to do, she does lying down, using a voice-activated computer program.

In March, Foley sat in pain in the U.S. Senate chambers, listening to politicians debate whether to employ the never-before-used Congressional Review Act to repeal the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's workplace ergonomics standard covering carpal tunnel syndrome, back injuries and other musculoskeletal injuries. Agency experts said this standard—which medical and public health experts and unions worked 10 years to pass—would prevent hundreds of thousands of crippling injuries like hers annually.

While watching the Senate debate, Foley says she recalled GOP congressional leaders announcing the day before Vice President Al Gore withdrew from the presidential election that they would work with the Bush administration to overturn the ergonomics safety measure. And as the full-scale attack on the worker protection standard got under way in February, Vice President Richard Cheney kicked off massive corporate lobbying with his keynote address at the convention of the National Association of Manufacturers, a leading opponent of the job safety standard. Then Foley

What's more, the ergonomics repeal means there can be no question that Big Business, its congressional allies and the Bush administration are set on rolling back good government, unions and workplace protections, according to Eric Frumin, UNITE health and safety director. "The corporate lobby and their political handmaidens in Congress and Bush—who raised \$250 million in corporate campaign donations—made it perfectly clear what their agenda was before the election."

"Not in recent memory have Big Business interests hostile to the concerns of working families held such sway with our president and the U.S. Congress," AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney said after the House vote.

In fact, a record \$3 billion poured into federal campaigns during the last election—an estimated 55 percent went to Bush and GOP congressional candidates, and \$696 million of that came from corporations and wealthy executives, according to a recent *Mother Jones* magazine investigation. And repealing the job safety standard is just the beginning of the

Bush administration's big kiss to Big Business, says Frank Clemente, director of Public Citizen's Congress Watch. "Its wishes include huge tax breaks, no minimum wage increase, no drug benefit under Medicare and the total emasculation of OSHA and all worker, public health or environmental protections," he says.

Union activists and their allies suggest the following steps in the fight for ergonomics protections:

**the first time in OSHA's 30-year history, Congress voted to nullify one of its health and safety rules.**

watched the Senate vote 56–44 along party lines, with six Democrats crossing over, to kill it.

Foley left the chambers in disgust. "This vote was a pay-off for campaign contributions—legislators are not doing their job, which is to look out for the American people," she says. The next day, the House debated only one hour before voting 223–206 for repealing the standard—again along party lines, with 16 Democrats for repeal and 13 Republicans against overturning the rule.

For the first time in OSHA's 30-year history, Congress voted to nullify one of its health and safety rules. In putting Big Business's demands above the needs of working families, Congress "tossed an issue of science out the window in just 10 hours of debate," says Jim Young, special projects director of the New Jersey Work Environment Council, a union-environmental coalition.

## • Contact members of Congress.

Thank both Democratic and Republican lawmakers who voted to save the workplace safety standard and hold accountable those who voted against worker safety. The AFL-CIO website ([www.aflcio.org/vrecord/vr\\_interim.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/vrecord/vr_interim.htm)) lists the House and Senate votes and enables activists to send follow-up messages to their members of Congress.

• **Consider a local campaign for a statewide ergonomics standard.** Washington State has a strong ergonomics standard that was adopted in May 2000. Although Washington's law now is under heavy attack by Big Business, activists there "are not giving up," says David Groves, Washington State Labor Council spokesman.

## • Fight to make ergo protection part of contracts.

Last November, the Amalgamated Service and Allied Industries Joint Board, a major UNITE affiliate representing 4,000 New York laundry workers, negotiated a new contract that requires laundries to implement the OSHA standard. In the future, it will be "a lot easier to negotiate 75-pound weight limits," says UNITE's Frumin, "because OSHA said that more than 75 pounds is too much." ■



# Block Bush's Big Business\$\$ BULLDOZER

## Here's how you can get involved:

- Urge union members to call their senators toll free at **800-718-1008** and tell them to vote against the Bush millionaire tax cut.
- Copy the **4-page insert** in this issue (between pages 12 and 13) and distribute to members, friends and community allies.
- Call for action fliers to distribute to union members, urging them to help **Stop the Millionaire Tax Cut: 202-637-5077**.
- Download **Stop the Millionaire Tax Cut** PDF fliers at [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org).

DRIVING A BIG BUSINESS AGENDA, George W. Bush has used his first 100 days in office to pay back his wealthy corporate contributors at the expense of working families. Bush has:

- Killed a workplace health and safety protection that took 10 years to develop.
- Proposed a budget that subjects the Medicare trust fund to raiding.
- Banned project labor agreements that ensure low-cost, dependable public construction projects.
- Undermined workers in airline collective bargaining.

NOW, BUSH WANTS a millionaire tax cut that makes the wealthiest 10 percent big winners and gives little or no tax

help to lower-income families that need help most.

Bush's millionaire tax cut would devour the entire surplus and make it impossible to improve our children's schools, strengthen health care for our families and secure dignified retirement for our older citizens. If he succeeds, our nation will pay the price for the next 20 years.

But Bush's Big Business bulldozer can be stopped.

On **April 11**, the working families of the AFL-CIO and 150 grassroots organizations in the Fair Taxes for All Coalition are holding rallies, press conferences and demonstrations in more than 30 cities to **Stop the Millionaire Tax Cut**.

## Stop the Millionaire Tax Cut • April 11

**BushWatch**

For regular updates on where George W. Bush stands on working family issues, visit BushWatch at [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org).

**Call 202-637-5077 for more information.**



Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

MAY 2001

# America @work

## ALSO INSIDE:

**Voice@Work:**  
Around the Nation  
and Around the  
World

**Building Lifelong  
Unionism**

**Passing a Tougher  
Hate Crimes Law**

**STEERING A COURSE**

**TO QUALITY SCHOOLS**



**"IN THE MARCH** 2001 issue you highlighted a 'union' wedding [Union Wedding Bell News]. My wife and I had a truly union label wedding. We had both recently graduated from college and were both members of the AFT in North Carolina. The pastor who officiated the marriage also was a union member, as he belonged to the same local as my father—[IUE-CWA] Local 182 in Hickory, N.C. The bride, groom and pastor were each carrying a union card."—*Thomas Hefner, United Guilford Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 2258*

## SAY WHAT?

**How does your union plan to reach out to retirees and encourage them to join the Alliance for Retired Americans?**

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's Say What? Selected responses will appear in a future issue. [America@work](mailto:America@work), 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; phone: 202-637-5010; fax: 202-508-6908; e-mail: [atwork@afcio.org](mailto:atwork@afcio.org).

## HERE'S WHAT YOU SAY

**ABOUT HOW YOUR UNION IS USING E-TOOLS TO ORGANIZE, BARGAIN AND MOBILIZE:**

"On our website, [www.liuna777.org](http://www.liuna777.org), we give a free mouse pad to every member who... provides us with their e-mail address. [That] allows us to send...membership/steward meeting notice updates, bargaining updates, etc.... In our [online] newsletter...we [offer] a free prize ([e.g.] two free tickets to Disneyland) to the member who finds his or her name on our website and calls by a certain date. This helps drive members to our website who haven't visited before. We have a section...called 'What's Happening at Your Worksites!' where members can see the latest news, meeting notices, candidates we are endorsing, etc."—*Fred Lowe, business manager, Laborers Local 777, Riverside, Calif.*

**"I HAVE WRITTEN** Mr. Bush an e-mail telling him how mean-spirited and wrong-thinking he was to even consider legislation that would limit the strength of unions....The Republican Party has increasingly become *anti-union* over the years and seems bent on destroying every last union. They just don't seem to understand...that every day, ordinary working people want the same things in life as corporate America does—food for their table, transportation, the ability to provide for their children and send their children to college and fair and equitable pay. Thank you for the good work you do for the working families of the United States."—*Rose Driscoll, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.*

**"THE STATEMENT...**made by your organization regarding giving each individual \$400 instead of the large, unpredictable tax cut the president wants is excellent. Your tax cut makes sense and I hope it becomes a reality."—*Russ Ripka, Cranford, N.J.*

**"AS BUSH PUSHES** for tax cuts and increased military spending, I can't help remembering the Reagan tax cuts and spending. Following the 'trickle down' economic lies, I recall the worst layoffs in my plant's history, concession bargaining and a decade of no real wage increases for workers, while the rich repeatedly bought our companies with our own pension money....I suggest you dust off the [Reagan] economic charts...to expose Bush's plan for what it is: A plan to line the pockets of the people who bought the presidency for him."—*Dan Hamilton, AFSCME Research Department and former UAW Local 2200 member, Indianapolis*

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**America@work**

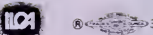
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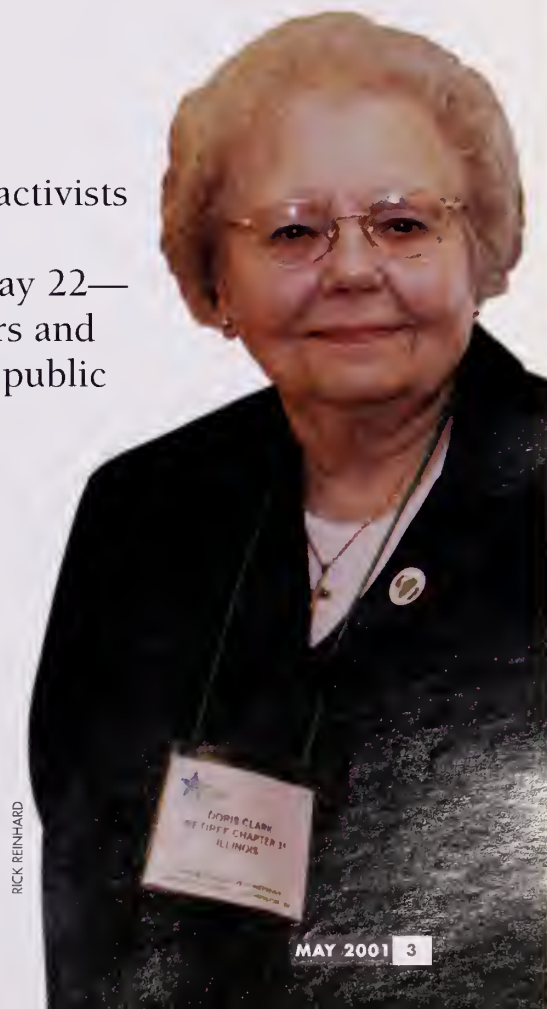
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Passing a tougher hate crimes law



RICK REINHARD

Cover: Alex Boies/Stock Illustration Source



# Saying 'No' to a Millionaire Tax Cut

In more than 40 cities in 27 states, thousands of union members joined community, civil rights, women's, environmental and other activists April 11 in a National Day of Action. Workers and their families protested President George W. Bush's \$2.4 trillion millionaire tax cut and called for a fair tax cut that leaves enough funds to pay for working family priorities. Under the Bush scheme, 45 percent of the tax breaks go to the nation's richest 1 percent. Those earning less than \$44,000 a year would get an average tax cut of \$256 a year, while the rich—with an average annual income of \$1.1 million—would gain about \$55,000 a year. The \$2.4 trillion cut would use the entire surplus and leave nothing for investing in such working family priorities as education, health care, a Medicare pre-

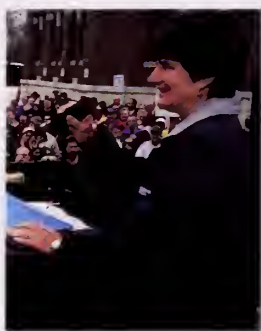
scription drug benefit and Social Security.

In Detroit, 400 union members and supporters gathered at a UAW-sponsored rally outside Herman Keifer Hospital, which provides health care for many of the city's uninsured

families and their children. "With the money Bush wants to pay for his tax cut, you could provide health care and insurance for the people who really need help, instead of using it for this mil-

lionaire's windfall," Metropolitan Detroit AFL-CIO President Donald Boggs told the crowd. He was joined by UAW Vice President Elizabeth Bunn and Tina Abbott, secretary-treasurer of the Michigan State AFL-CIO.

The National Day of Action was sponsored by Fair Taxes for All, a coalition with more than 500 member organizations, including the AFL-CIO. ☐



JIM WEST



JIM WEST

**Tax break for fat cats: UAW Vice President Elizabeth Bunn (above) joins hundreds of working families in Detroit April 11 to protest Bush's tax giveaway to the wealthy.**

MARIA ELLEN HUEBNER



**Speaking out: AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson joins working families at a recent *Respect Work Strengthen Family* meeting in Milwaukee.**

## Working Families Speak Their Minds

Coast to coast, working families are gathering to discuss such issues as quality education and affordable health care, as union activists wind up a nationwide series of *Respect Work, Strengthen Family* town hall-style meetings.

The Milwaukee County Labor Council convened a meeting with AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson, Wisconsin State AFL-CIO President David Newby and 30 state and local legislators. Workers testified about voting rights, a proposed change in state bankruptcy law and prescription drug costs. AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka joined working families in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, while in Tallahassee, Fla., AFSCME President Gerald McEntee and Florida AFL-CIO President Marilyn Lenard joined union members and community leaders to discuss attacks by Gov. Jeb Bush (R) on state workers (see story, page 5). The Florida legislature is considering a paycheck deception bill that

specifically targets teachers and prohibits checkoff for political action and other issues not specifically related to bargaining.

And on March 26, in the City Council's chambers in Columbus, Ohio, Steelworkers Local 169 member Carolyn Muth wept as she described the economic and emotional distress afflicting the families of the union's 629 members locked out by AK Steel in 1999—whose unemployment compensation ran out long ago. Activists including Ohio AFL-CIO President Bill Burga and Columbus-Franklin County AFL-CIO President Dave Caldwell urged members to lobby state lawmakers to lift the benefit cap—if companies are forced to pay indefinitely, they likely would return workers to their jobs a lot sooner, they said. ☐

**RESPECT  
WORK  
STRENGTHEN  
FAMILY**  
AFL-CIO



## Got Equal Pay?

**A**ctivists rallied nationwide April 3, Equal Pay Day, to voice support for new federal legislation introduced in Congress—the Paycheck Fairness Act—and for state and local laws that would narrow the wage gap. April 3 is the day when 15 months of women's pay catches up to men's salaries from the year before.

According to a draft study commissioned under the Clinton administration by the Department of Labor and released April 3 by Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), the average woman working on a U.S. government contract job is paid 72 cents for every dollar a man earns. The Bush administration has refused to release the report, and Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao said April 3 the report was “flawed.”

In Augusta, Maine, UNITE Vice President Clayola Brown joined unionists, members of women's groups and advocates for low-income families to celebrate new state rules that enforce a Maine



**Closing the gap:** UNITE Vice President Clayola Brown (far right) and union and community activists celebrate new rules enforcing a Maine law requiring equal pay for equal work.

law requiring equal pay for equal work. In Washington State, members of AFSCME, the Washington Federation of Teachers and SEIU were joined by AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson March 29 as they called for equal cost-of-living increases for all state employees and for an ongoing campaign to close the pay gap between part-time and full-time state community college teachers.

And in Montgomery, Ala., members of the Communications Workers of America, Machinists, Steelworkers, UAW and building trades unions rallied to support pending state legislation mandating equal pay for equal work. Says Alabama AFL-CIO President Stewart Burkhalter: “Most union contracts have equal pay provisions, but we support the bill because it benefits all workers.” @

## AFSCME Battles Attack on Florida State Workers

**P**rotesting efforts of Gov. Jeb Bush (R) and the Florida legislature to privatize state government, eliminate job protections and ban state employees from taking part in any political activity, including lobbying, using union dues—with or without member permission—more than 1,000 AFSCME activists rallied April 9 at the Florida state capitol in Tallahassee. AFSCME President Gerald McEntee, AFL-CIO

President John J. Sweeney, AFSCME Council 79 President Jeanette Wynn and other union leaders and state and local legislators joined in the demonstrations. “Not in memory has a state tried to impose such an extreme anti-union measure as this ban on our political activity,” says Wynn.

The week before, an arbitration report had called Bush's plan to cut state government by 27,000 jobs and abolish the

## SPOTLIGHT

### ORGANIZING THROUGH THE ROOF

**W**hen some 325 residential roofing workers in Phoenix won a voice at work and began working under their first-ever union contract in March, it offered fresh proof for the United Union of Roofers and Waterproofers that they made the right decision five years ago. At that time, says John Martini, Roofers executive vice president and organizing director, Roofers committed a huge chunk of resources—40 percent of the union's income—to organizing.

“We made the commitment that even if we go in the hole, we've got to go out and organize—and every year for the last four years, we've gained membership,” says Martini. In those four years, the union has grown from 19,000 to more than 23,000 members, a 25 percent increase.

While the commercial roofing market accounts for the biggest portion of the Roofers' membership, the union recently has sought to bring a voice at work to residential roofers, especially in the booming Southwest, where the immigrant workforce often is exploited.

“The residential market has been nonunion for so long and everybody is taking advantage of these people,” he says.

In Phoenix and Las Vegas, community support has helped pressure builders to recognize the workers' choice of a union. Roofing workers in Phoenix also filed class action lawsuits alleging pay violations and other breaches of labor law, which Martini says helped spur Diversified to recognize the workers' decision to join the union. It also helped avoid a long, drawn-out election process.

The success of Local 135 workers in winning a contract that includes fully paid family health care and pensions may have a domino effect on the area's other 2,700 roofing workers who are coming together in a union that ranks organizing as its top job.

For more information, visit [www.justiceforroofers.org](http://www.justiceforroofers.org) @



**Top job:** Roofers in Arizona rally for a first contract.

remaining state workers' job protections “illogical.” Despite a 20-day “cooling-off” period ordered by a Florida state circuit judge, the legislature immediately met to discuss the contract and attempted to exempt the state government from any future arbitration reports or mediation. If, after the cooling-off period ends, the legislators vote to resolve the impasse by ramming through

Gov. Bush's onerous plan, the new AFSCME contract could be imposed on workers for a year.

“This contract is retribution against AFSCME not only for its activity during the election, but also its protest activities when Bush removed affirmative action from state government programs,” says Wynn. “Our members are taking it to the streets, if it takes us through election year 2002.” @



# LONGSHOREMEN: BATTLING FOR THEIR LIVES

**W**hen 125 members of Longshoremen Local 1422 in Charleston, S.C., tried to set up informational pickets at the city's port to protest the use of nonunion workers on a Danish freighter in January 2000, they were met by 600 armed police in riot gear. Within minutes, the police, without provocation, waded into the crowd of marchers, attacking them with billy clubs and injuring several, says Local 1422 President Ken Riley, who was hit by police as he tried to restore calm. Police arrested nine workers on trespassing charges. The charges later were raised to felony charges of inciting and participating in a riot, which carries a maximum penalty of up to five years in prison. A grand jury indicted five of the men, and a trial date has not been set.

"This shows the aggressiveness of the powers that be—Big Business and the politicians—to crush one of the most visible and active unions in the state," Riley says.

Riley thinks the predominantly African American local union also was targeted by state officials after it took a leading role in efforts by civil rights groups to remove the Confederate flag from the state capitol. The police attack took place within two days after 47,000 people marched, urging the legislature to lower the flag.

The antipathy of the state's business community to unions is so great, says Donna DeWitt, president of the South Carolina AFL-CIO, the legislature is considering a bill to make it illegal for union members who have jobs related to the port to serve on the state port authority. Other bills would make it impossible for unions to collect dues and agency fees in the so-called right to work state. Another would prevent local governments from implementing living wage agreements.

The state federation and Local 1422 have joined with community allies to develop committees across the state and the country to support the five union members. AFL-CIO President John Sweeney wrote all state federations and affiliate unions asking them for their support—and Riley says the response has been phenomenal.

The ILA has set up a national fund to assist the Charleston workers. Send contributions to the ILA Defense Fund, ILA, Dept. M, 17 Battery Park Place, Room 930, New York, N.Y. 10004. Or, make checks payable to the Dock Workers Defense Fund and send to the Campaign for Worker Rights in South Carolina, P.O. Box 21777, Charleston, S.C. 29413. ☐

# Oil Workers: Slick Moves in Texas

**A**s already-huge corporations merge to become even bigger megacorporations, workers are finding they also must come together to build a stronger voice on the job. In Baytown, Texas, 970 workers at the newly merged

Exxon Mobil did just that when they voted to affiliate with PACE International Union in late March.

"This victory makes us stronger when we go to the bargaining table" to negotiate for better pay, benefits and



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

# PLAs: On Time and Under Budget

**B**uilding and construction trades union members mobilized on Capitol Hill last month to persuade members of Congress that despite Bush administration claims about project labor agreements, the construction pacts are beneficial to communities, employers and workers.

The 500 delegates, part of the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department's annual legislative conference, sought support for a bipartisan bill that would allow PLAs on federally funded construction projects. One of George W. Bush's first acts as president was to issue an executive order banning the agreements from all federally funded construction projects.

Unions negotiate PLAs with construction project owners, either government agencies or construction management firms. The agreements generally establish a common set of work rules, working conditions, hir-

**Building support:** BCTD President Edward Sullivan (center), and (from left) Reps. Peter King (R-N.Y.) and Jack Quinn (R-N.Y.), Asbestos Workers President William Bernard and Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.) join 500 building and construction trades delegates.

ing practices and dispute-settlement mechanisms, usually with the stipulation that there will be no strikes by the unions or lockouts by management. In March, the Bush administration amended the executive order to allow many current projects covered under PLAs to continue, a move BCTD President Edward Sullivan called a "small step in the right direction," but one which "does not reverse the harm" done by the original order.

The legislation, H.R. 1360 was introduced April 3 by Reps. Peter King (R-N.Y.), George Miller (D-Calif.) and Jack Quinn (R-N.Y.).

"This isn't a political issue," says Quinn. "It's simply the right thing to do. Project labor agreements work, they bring work in on time and under budget." ☐

safety, says Rick Massengill, affiliations coordinator for PACE, which already represents thousands of workers in the oil industry, including those at seven other Exxon Mobil facilities.

Workers want to bargain for safe staffing levels and seek to prevent contracting-out to nonunion companies that pay

lower wages and provide less training, creating serious safety concerns for workers and the surrounding communities, he says. A strong, 100-person organizing committee fought back against the company's attempts to dissuade workers from joining PACE. This is the union's 10th affiliation victory in three years. ☐





## Triangle Shirtwaist Conditions Now Global

**H**undreds of union and community members marked the 90th anniversary of the nation's worst industrial factory fire March 25, with a rally at the site of the Triangle Shirtwaist building where more than 145 workers, most of them women, died in 1911. The employer had locked the stairwell exits, trapping the workers inside.

The inhumane conditions that led to the Triangle tragedy "have been reproduced around the world with the same disastrous results," said UNITE President Jay Mazur who, along with Gov. George Pataki and Cardinal Edward Egan, took part in the daylong commemoration.

Kohinur Begum, who survived a fire last November that killed 51 workers, most of them women, at the Chowdhury Knitwear Factory in Bangladesh, told the crowd she survived only because she

found a way out of the building, where most doors were locked, as they were in the Triangle fire.

Meanwhile, in Washington, D.C., a resolution commemorating the 90th anniversary and honoring the victims of the fire was submitted in the House by Reps. Peter King (R-N.Y.) and Bill Pascrell Jr. (D-N.J.)—but the Republican leadership refused to schedule the resolution for a vote, says Joe Waks, communications director for Pascrell.

The most fitting tribute to honor those who died at Triangle, said AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson, would be to work together to end sweatshops. "Together, we will end the sweatshops when we reject the free trade that enslaves working people and replace it with fair trade that enforces their basic rights all over the world." ☐

## UAW Stands Up for Overtime Protections

**D**uring the recent congressional recess, UAW members across the country lobbied their representatives to stand up and fight expected efforts by the Republican leadership to erode overtime protections passed more than 60 years ago.

Republicans announced they will offer amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act, which established the 40-hour workweek and set standards for overtime pay, says Alan Reuther, UAW legislative director. The amendments, which could include exemptions for selected workers or give employers the option of offering compensatory time off instead of paying overtime, probably will be offered when the Senate takes up the proposed minimum wage increase this month, Reuther says. ☐

## OUT FRONT

**I**t is some small success that the worldwide movement to make the global economy work for working families has forced world leaders to acknowledge concern for workers' rights and the environment in trade talks. "Our commitment to open trade must be matched by a strong commitment to protecting our environment and improving labor standards," President George W. Bush said recently in praising the Free Trade Area of the Americas agreement.

In the Quebec Declaration that came out of the recent Summit of the Americas, paving FTAA's way, heads of Western Hemisphere democracies said their governments should "strengthen environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources" and "promote compliance with internationally recognized core labor standards..."

But while we must hold Bush and other national leaders accountable to craft policy consistent with their statements, we can't hold our breath waiting for their nice rhetoric to become reality. Bush made clear he doesn't want worker and environmental protection provisions incorporated into the FTAA agreement—or any other trade agreement—and the FTAA will not protect workers' rights and the environment.

FTAA, described in an *Industry Standard* article as "NAFTA on steroids," would extend the disastrous North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to 34 potential member nations with 800 million people throughout the Americas.

We've seen how miserably NAFTA's phony worker protections have failed in the treaty's first seven years: NAFTA has cost more than 1 million jobs in this country and Canada, cut the wages of Mexican workers by 20 percent or more and spurred the development of Mexican maquiladora plants, where workers' rights are trampled and toxic waste is spewed.

FTAA doesn't even include NAFTA's ineffective protections. It has been negotiated beyond public view. And now Bush wants Congress to grant him Fast Track trade negotiating authority so he can continue negotiating trade agreements in private, without public or congressional interference.

But before we can entrust Bush—or any president—with Fast Track authority, U.S. trade policy must be dramatically reoriented, based on an open national debate, to serve people rather than multinational corporations alone. Language on workers' rights and environmental protection must be more than empty words—it must be concrete and enforceable and at the core of every trade agreement.

Until then, working families will continue to insist—as student protesters did in Quebec City—that "our world is not for sale," and resistance to trade expansion will grow. And until then, we must reject Fast Track authority for this president, just as we did in 1997 and 1998. ☐

## Fast Track: Here We Go Again



BY JOHN J. SWEENEY



# Organizing + Political Action =

# VOICE @WORK

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI



**Victory day:** Graduate teaching assistants at Temple University celebrate a March organizing win in an election made possible with the help of local lawmakers.

When 550 teaching assistants at Temple University in Philadelphia, a city with a thriving union movement, sought a voice at work with AFT to address low wages and job insecurity, they reached out to members of the city council as a key part of their campaign for community support. The Temple University Graduate Students' Association amassed enough support to convince the city council in November to unanimously pass a resolution supporting the T.A.s' efforts. This was just the impetus the foot-dragging university needed to comply with a Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board ruling that the graduate employees indeed had the right to organize. In late March, the student workers voted overwhelmingly for the union, 290 to 16.

As part of their efforts to gain a voice at work, workers across the country increasingly are reaching out to local elected officials, who recognize that supporting working families benefits the communities they represent. "Legislative bodies should fight to make sure their constituents get treated fairly," says Philadelphia City Councilman David Cohen, the resolution's sponsor. "If workers get treated right, we'll have better neighborhoods."

The involvement of elected officials helps create an environment in which employers think twice before waging aggressive anti-

union campaigns, while workers are empowered to choose a voice at work. Enlisting elected officials in voice at work campaigns—including efforts by baseball stadium workers in Cleveland, gas company employees in Arizona and hotel workers in San Jose, Calif.—“creates a neutral climate, which is an environment where organizing can take place,” says AFT organizer Rich Klimmer. These efforts highlight the connection between organizing and political action by creating ongoing campaigns that cultivate a permanent core of activists for action year round.

## **When numbers add up, lawmakers pay attention**

The Philadelphia City Council's resolution was just the beginning of TUGSA's efforts to involve elected officials. As a public university, Temple must win funding from the state legislature every year. TUGSA—aided by the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, the AFT's state body and the state AFL-CIO and area central labor councils—solicited letters written by city and state legislators to the university urging administrators to set an election date. By the time administrators appeared at public hearings before the state legislature's appropriations committee, elected officials asked them why the university was hiring a union-busting law firm

HARVEY FINKLE



with taxpayer money. When elected officials showed up with union activists to leaflet Temple's Feb. 24 basketball game, it was TUGSA that got a slam dunk: A few days later, the university set the election date.

"The elected officials saw we had friends, not only in unions but in the community," says Klimmer. "They were getting the message from a lot of places and they did the arithmetic." In return, says Klimmer, union members "have to be good citizens. Show up during election time."

### Union issues = working family issues

Activists with Electrical Workers Local 769 are using the same type of strategic thinking in their continuing campaign for a first contract at Southwest Gas in Arizona after forming a union in May 1999. As a public utility, Southwest Gas must get approval for rate increases from the Arizona Corporation Commission, a state agency with funding set by the legislature. Union leaders built support from a core group of five legislators who participate in the union's events and communicate with their colleagues and regulators. "It's a tree that's branched out," says Sean Cunniff, an IBEW organizer. A critical part of reaching out to legislators is tapping into issues that large numbers of their constituents—in addition to union members—care about.

When Southwest Gas proposed a rate increase, IBEW joined with other unions and consumer, religious and community groups to argue the hike would unfairly burden working families. "We have to build bridges to community and religious groups, and this campaign is a tool to do it," says Jeff Carpenter, a bargaining team member and corrosion specialist at Southwest Gas.



**Bargaining:** New members of IBEW Local 769 are reaching out to legislators in their campaign for a first contract at Southwest Gas in Arizona.

State legislators joined the activists at a recent news conference and decried the proposed increase. "We raise other issues besides those traditionally seen as 'union' issues," says Cunniff. "We raise issues that interest all working families."

### Year-round mobilization

As in Arizona, unions in Cleveland have strong ties to many elected officials in their town. In 1990, a coalition of unions, religious congregations, city council members and county commissioners spearheaded a successful referendum to build the Jacobs Field baseball stadium. So in 1998, when workers for the stadium's food-service subcontractor, SportServices, encountered management opposition while trying to join Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees

Local 10, union leaders enlisted support from many longtime allies. Elected officials joined in union-community delegations to speak with the Cleveland Indians team management. Though initially reluctant, the team convinced the subcontractor to stay neutral during the organizing campaign.

"Eventually, they did meet with us because they saw we had allies," says John Ryan, president of the Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor. The presence of the city councilman from the area in which the arena is located "was important to communicate to the team the entire community was watching," adds Ken Ilg, president of HERE Local 10. The workers won their election in September 1999 and negotiated a strong contract six months later, including better wages and benefits.

The labor council continues to deepen the connection between organizing and political action (see box, below).

### Creating a political climate for labor peace

HERE members more than 2,000 miles away in California's Silicon Valley followed a similar strategy. In several cities and counties, the Labor Council of South Bay, AFL-CIO and HERE Local 19 have worked to help elect and mobilize local officials who recognize the value labor peace agreements bring to their communities. Labor peace agreements prevent organizing campaigns from disrupting important government projects and services because employers and unions agree to let employees make their own decisions about whether to become unionized, free from harassment, intimidation and interference.

In 1999, for example, the Santa Clara City Council helped 160 workers get a labor

Mark your calendars for **7 Days in June**, the annual week of Voice@Work activities many union activists use as a springboard for ongoing organizing action. During **7 Days in June**, unions, community groups, religious leaders and other allies join together to expose employers who block workers' freedom to join a union—and unions, central labor councils and state federations are mobilizing supporters now for the week of marches, hearings and forums across the country.

Here's how to get involved with **7 Days in June** actions, June 9–16:

1. Download a leaflet announcing **7 Days in June** from [www.aflcio.org/voiceatwork/7daysinjune.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/voiceatwork/7daysinjune.htm).
2. Contact the regional coordinator nearest you:

Northeast	Cate Poe	973-202-6775	<a href="mailto:catepoe@compuserve.com">catepoe@compuserve.com</a>
West	Pat Lee	415-292-1400	<a href="mailto:patleeaflcio@compuserve.com">patleeaflcio@compuserve.com</a>
South	Keith Maddox	334-974-5466	<a href="mailto:tkmaddox@compuserve.com">tkmaddox@compuserve.com</a>
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Overall	Enid Eckstein	617-557-5488	<a href="mailto:enide@aol.com">enide@aol.com</a>

3. Order materials from the AFL-CIO Support Services Department, 800-442-5645 or 202-637-5042 in Washington, D.C.

4. Find out more about talking to allies about workers struggling to get a voice at work by clicking on [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org).

5. Report via the Internet on events you are planning: [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org). @



peace agreement at a new hotel development, the Santa Clara Hilton. Today, the workers are members of HERE Local 19 and have a strong contract—all without any economic disruption. The importance of labor peace has become so ingrained in the region the City of Mountain View recently included a labor peace provision when searching for a hotel developer.

The labor council regularly briefs candidates and elected officials on working family issues, including obstacles encountered in exercising the right to organize, and stands with candidates up for re-election, says Christina Uribe, the labor council's political director.

"These victories were only possible because we had relationships with elected officials." ☺

## Checklist: Making Political Action a Permanent Part of Organizing Campaigns

✓ Encourage elected officials to meet regularly with workers on working family issues, including the freedom to form a union.

✓ Connect union endorsements to support for organizing. For example, the Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor only will consider city council candidates for early endorsements this spring for the November elections if they sign a workers' bill of rights.

✓ Gradually ask elected leaders to do more in support of workers' freedom to choose a union, incrementally increasing their commitment level. For example, ask them to sign a pledge to support workers' freedom to organize and use the International Labor Organization's new poster to illustrate that this right is recognized all over the world (see page 12 and insert, between pages 12 and 13). Continue to link the rights of workers at home to form unions with the rights of workers abroad—for instance, by launching a campaign asking elected leaders to pledge not to purchase municipal uniforms and supplies made in overseas sweatshops.

✓ Support the legislators who support you. "Be good citizens," says AFT organizer Rich Klimmer. "Show up during election time." ☺

# A VOICE@ Around

BY JANE BIRNBAUM

Last year, the International Labor Organization, a United Nations agency, voted to sanction Burma—the first time the ILO has taken such a step. Yet, whether in the forced-labor factories of Burma and China or the sweatshops of Los Angeles and New York, workers routinely are denied basic rights—and many don't even know they have them.

To help secure fundamental rights for all workers, union, corporate and government members from the ILO's 175 member-nations in 1998 unanimously reaffirmed four basic rights defined by the ILO. These four rights form the "Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work."

On May 1, the global union movement launched an unprecedented public campaign to post the Declaration, in the form of a colorful poster, in workplaces, union halls and government offices worldwide. Union activists in this country and around the world see the poster as an effective way to involve communities in educating workers about their rights, their freedom to win a voice at work and employer interference with those rights.

In 1988, when the military took over the government in Burma and outlawed trade unions, Maung Maung, general secretary of the Burma Federation of Trade Unions, fled for his life. He had to leave behind his wife and 4-year-old son, neither of whom he has seen since.



JAMES B. PARKS

**Exiled: Burmese trade union leader Maung Maung has waged a 13-year fight for basic workers' rights—including free association, now illegal in Burma.**

With the help of the AFL-CIO Solidarity Center, the Thailand-based Maung Maung now campaigns around the world to restore Burma's free unions. Some 5 million Burmese—11 percent of all citizens—are in forced labor, primarily making apparel sold by American retailers, he says.

"Every dollar spent on garments from Burma benefits the military, because the military either owns the garment factories or has joint ventures with foreign companies," says Maung Maung. Recent reports



# ORK the World

by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions document cases in which Burmese children as young as 10 have been required to carry weapons. Other cases of citizen abuse involve torture, rape and murder, the ICFTU has found.


The race to the bottom by multinational corporations scouring the world for ever-cheaper labor has made posting the Declaration an urgent matter today, says Bill Jordan, ICFTU general secretary. "It gives us a powerful new tool to put a human

face on the unrestrained globalization that continues to undermine conditions and standards for millions of workers around the world," Jordan says.

The AFL-CIO is making distribution and posting of the Declaration poster a part of its Campaign for Global Fairness and a key tool in spreading the word about workers' rights, including the freedom to form unions, in this country and worldwide. What began in Seattle in 1999 is now a massive grassroots effort by the international union movement to write fair rules for the global economy that require respect for human rights, workers' rights and the environment—just as international rules already protect commercial rights.

"In a very real sense, we're calling into question child labor, forced labor, discrimination and freedom to form and join unions," says AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney. "We're challenging employers and governments around the world to help workers know their rights and exercise them freely."

Workers worldwide who seek a voice at work share common struggles. In Indonesia and Mexico, for example, seeking to join a union can be dangerous or life threatening. Even in this country, freedom of association "is a right under severe...pressure when workers in the United States try to exercise it," according to a 2000 report from the nonprofit Human Rights Watch. A study by Cornell University Prof. Kate Bronfenbrenner released in 2000 found that when U.S.



**The right to organize  
and bargain collectively.  
The right to refuse forced labor.  
The right to reject child labor.  
The right to work free  
from discrimination.**



workers seek to organize, workers were forced to attend anti-union “captive audience” meetings in 92 percent of campaigns, and supervisors conducted one-on-one sessions with workers in an effort to intimidate them from joining a union in 79 percent of campaigns (“Uneasy Terrain: The Impact of Capital Mobility on Workers, Wages, and Union Organizing,” U.S. Trade Deficit Review Commission, [www.ustdrc.gov/research/bronfenbrenner.pdf](http://www.ustdrc.gov/research/bronfenbrenner.pdf)).

The Teamsters now are considering how best to use the ILO poster as a tool in organizing Mexican truckers who work for such subsidiaries of U.S. trucking companies as Roadway Express and Consolidated Freight, as the likelihood increases that the U.S.-Mexico border soon will open to Mexican trucks and truckers.

“The Teamsters are already meeting with our union companies, asking them to

## Union activists can make the Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work poster a key part of organizing, bargaining and other union action.

adopt the principles of the Declaration in their overseas operations, and in some cases asking them to post the ILO poster wherever they’re operating, overseas and in the U.S.,” says Teamsters Legislative Representative Jennifer Esposito.

Repression of workers’ rights in developing nations leads to the destruction of good jobs for American workers, says Jeff

Crosby, president of the North Shore (Mass.) Labor Council and IUE-CWA Local 201. Increasingly, corporations are moving to countries with low wages and no freedom to join unions.

In recent years, IUE-CWA Local 201 members have seen \$19-an-hour General Electric jobs in Massachusetts turn into \$4-a-day jobs in Reynosa, Mexico. Workers at GE plants in Mexico also have no benefits and no voice at work. They are asking managers at the Lynn, Mass., plant of Ametek—a GE contractor that moved jobs to Mexico on GE’s orders, according to Crosby—to post ILO posters throughout the Massachusetts factory.

Whatever they respond, they “can’t stop us from posting it on our own boards,” Crosby says. “And people think it’s cool.”

Executives of GE, however, which the U.S. Council for International Business represents in the ILO, probably wouldn’t use “cool” to describe the ILO poster.

“GE actively interferes with workers’ rights to organize,” charges Doug Meyer, director of research for IUE-CWA.

He points to Malaysia, where the law prohibits workers from getting a voice at work in the electronics sector but allows it in the electrical division—a critical distinction. GE got its Malaysian plant’s original classification changed from electrical to electronic, and that word game effectively wiped out the workers’ chance for a voice at work, says Meyer.

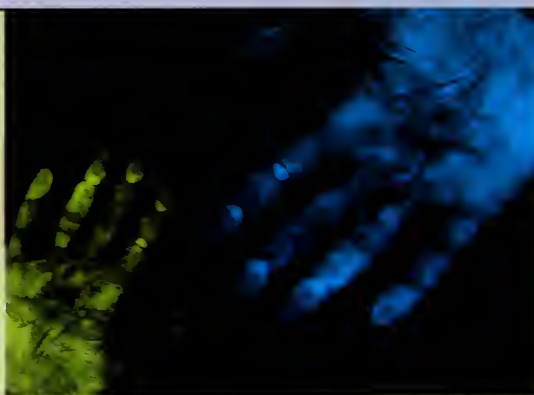
“At some point, we’re going to approach GE executives and tell them, ‘We understand that your ILO representatives in Geneva agreed to adhere to the standards in the Declaration, so will you publicly state in all your operations that you do, and here are ILO posters for you to post,’” says Meyer. ☐

(James B. Parks contributed to this article.)

## Post It!

Union activists can make the Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work poster a key part of organizing, bargaining and other union action. Here’s how:

- Distribute the poster during an organizing or first-contract campaign. If an employer is violating workers’ rights, hold a press conference or rally calling on the employer to change its behavior, pointing out the ILO rights, with the poster as a prop.
- Spotlight an employer’s unfair actions during a **7 Days in June** Voice@Work event—see box, page 9—with the poster as an action tool.
- Explain to clergy and community leaders the workers’ rights listed on the poster—they then can use the poster when asking a company to do the right thing.



- Sponsor a city or county resolution on workers’ freedom to form unions, using the rights as one of the supporting arguments.
- Ask candidates running for public office to sign a pledge with their active support for championing the principles locally and in trade and investment agreements.
- Highlight the rights and the poster in your newsletter, websites, newspapers and in union meetings.

*Copies of the Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work poster and a screen saver poster can be downloaded at: [www.aflcio.org/iloposter/iloscreensaver.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/iloposter/iloscreensaver.htm). Posters can be ordered from the AFL-CIO by calling 800-442-5645 or in Washington, D.C., 202-637-5042. ☐*

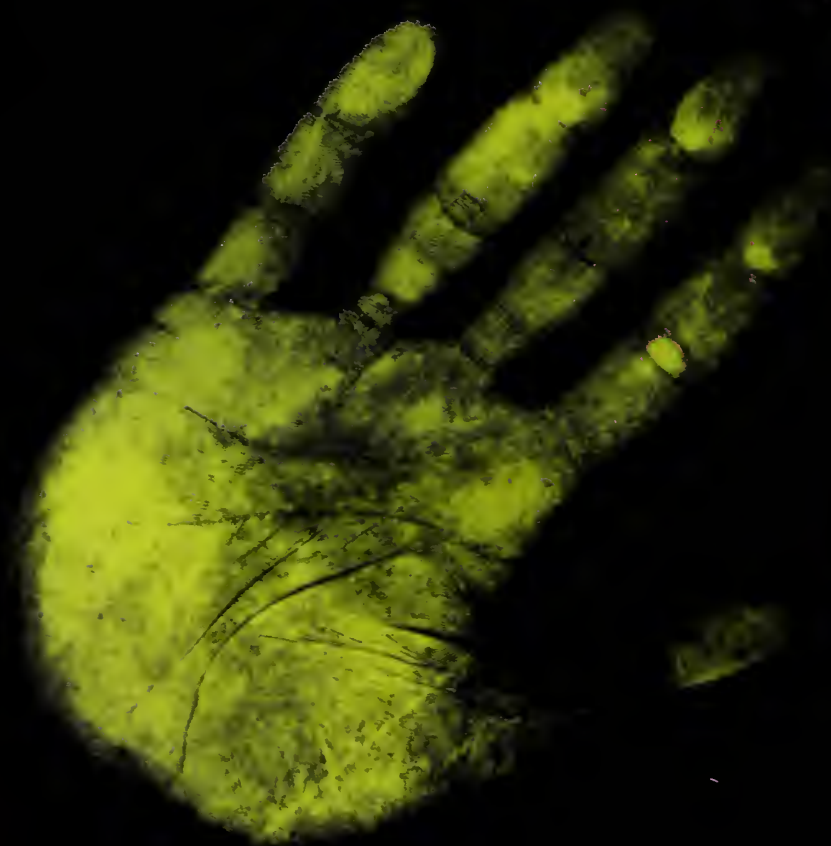






You have

right



## DECLARATION ON FUNDAMENTAL

All ILO Member States are required to respect

To know more about these workplace rights

pany to do the rig



# nts

to organize and bargain collectively  
to refuse forced labor  
to reject child labor  
to work free from discrimination



#### FOR FAIRNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

The International Labor Organization brings together workers, employers and governments to promote fairness in the workplace. We are part of the United Nations family.

## PRINCIPLES AND RIGHTS AT WORK

promote and realize these principles and rights

[www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org) or call your local ILO Office









# Working Longer Making Less

## The nation's economic boom has benefited the wealthy, but passed over middle- and low-income families

While the nation's overall economy improved in the late 1990s, more workers are working longer hours, lack health insurance and are carrying more debt, according to *The State of Working America, 2000–2001*, the Economic Policy Institute's biennial report.

Among the report's key findings:

- After more than 15 years of stagnation and decline, inflation-adjusted wages rose for all workers between 1995 and 1999. The lowest- and highest-paid workers saw the greatest wage growth.
- Labor productivity—the value of goods and services workers produce—has grown exceptionally fast, about 2.5 percent annually, since 1995. But workers aren't sharing in those gains, with low- and middle-income workers experiencing a drop in total household income.
- In the 1990s, wage inequality in America shifted. In the 1980s, it “fanned out,” with the lowest- and highest-paid workers pulling away from the middle. But in the 1990s, wages for the lowest-paid workers and those in the middle grew closer, while wages for the highest paid pulled further away from those groups.

Overall, the economic picture for workers improved in the late 1990s. But the report's co-authors—Lawrence Mishel, Jared Bernstein and John Schmitt—wonder whether “these many improvements mean that we are living in the ‘best economy ever?’” Economic progress in the late 1990s, they point out, follows a long period of wage stagnation and decline in the standard of living, while wage and income inequalities remain high.

Only 62.9 percentage of the workforce had employer-provided health coverage in 1998, compared with 70.2 percent in 1979. The average family now works 83 weeks a year, up from 68 weeks in 1969. And an average middle-income African American family needed more than 12 additional weeks of work than the average white family to reach the middle-income ranks in the 1990s. Personal bankruptcies, the “ultimate indicator of debt-related difficulties,” the report says,

increased continuously during the late 1990s, with about six of every 1,000 adults declaring bankruptcy in 1999, almost twice the rate as in 1989, the last business cycle peak.

The authors, who wrote the report before passage in March of a bankruptcy “reform” bill that will make it almost impossible for working families to get a fresh start, note they completed the report's final draft a year ago, when a recession did not seem as likely as today. “We already are talking about recession and seeing signs of the labor market unraveling,” Bernstein says. “I would hope that workers could expect more out of the economy than a few years of tight markets and good growth.”

According to George Gonos, an assistant professor of employment relations at the State University of New York at Potsdam, threats of layoffs “will be used to manipulate the workforce.” Even before President George W. Bush took office, “he was talking up the recession. Reading between the lines, you can hear that as a way to hold down any further wage increases,” Gonos adds.

Although income inequality among America's working families grew at a slower rate in the 1990s than in the previous decade, the report finds that the poorest 20 percent of the

nation's working families experienced a drop in their share of the nation's total household income—a 0.3 percent decrease—with the middle 20 percent of families seeing a 0.9 percent decrease. Only the wealthiest top fifth of all families gained—2.6 percent.

Contributing to that increase were capital gains on stocks and skyrocketing CEO pay. The AFL-CIO Executive PayWatch website ([www.aflcio.org/paywatch/ceopay.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/paywatch/ceopay.htm)) reports that, according to *Business Week's* annual survey, the average CEO of a major corporation made \$12.4 million in 1999, up 17 percent from the previous year. That's 475 times more than an average blue-collar worker and six times the average CEO paycheck in 1990.

Because wages rose fastest for the least- and highest-paid Americans in the 1990s, there has been a “hollowing out in the middle,” Bernstein says.

Income inequality—which is higher in the United States than any other industrialized nation, according to the report—can mean such stark social inequalities as lack of access to health care and good schools and increased vulnerability to crime, Mishel explains. “I think many people care about inequality,” he says. “It works against many people's religious values. Most Americans' religious and secular values hold gross inequality to be unacceptable.”

—Jane Birnbaum

For a copy of the report, call 800-EPI-4844 (in the Washington, D.C., area, call 202-331-5510) or visit [www.epinet.org](http://www.epinet.org). \$24.95 softback and \$59.95 hardback. @

## Making Less (Unless You're Wealthy)

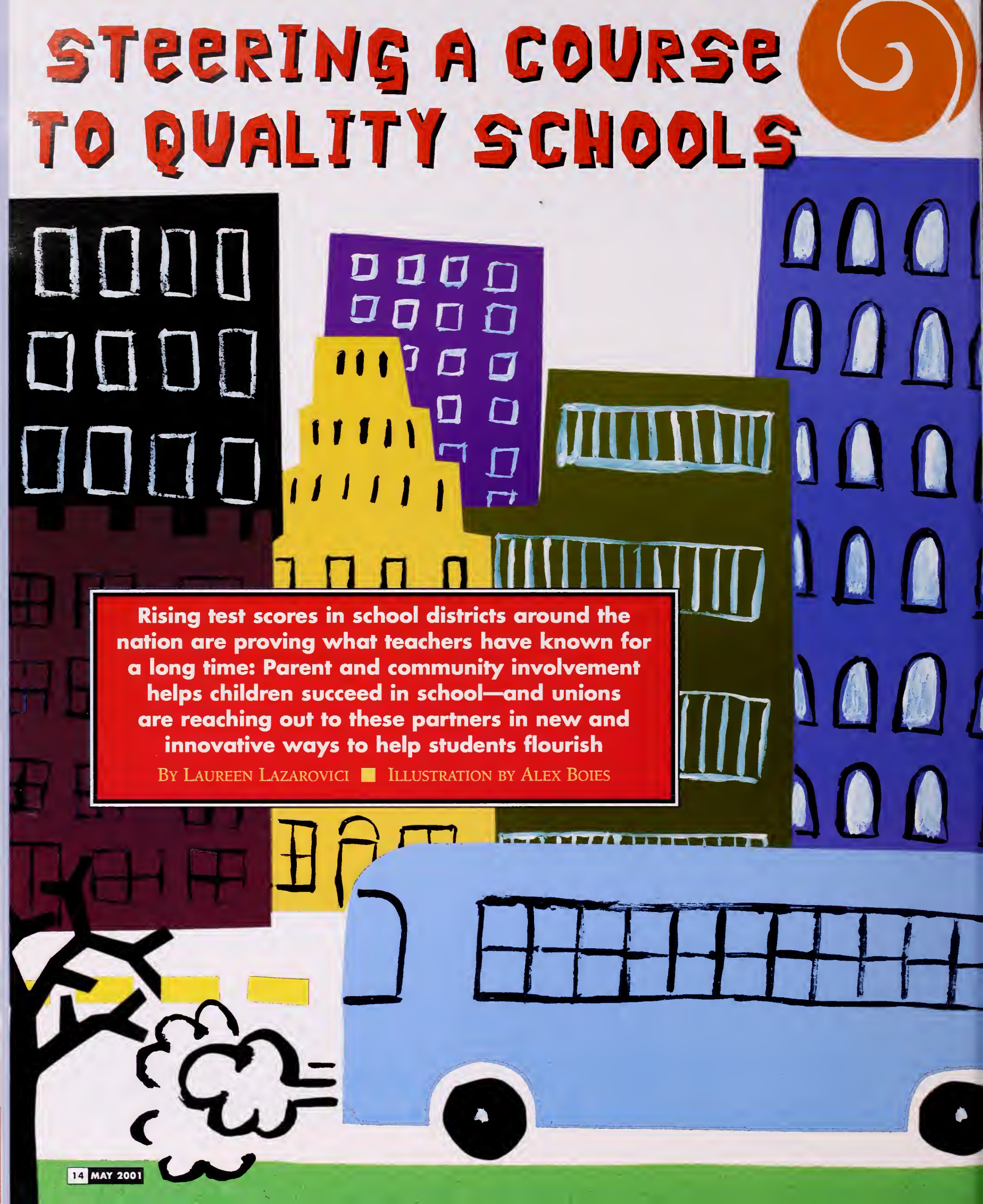
Wage bracket:	10th percentile	30th percentile	50th percentile	70th percentile	90th percentile	95th percentile
Earning level between 1979–1999:	–9.3 percent	–2.4 percent	–0.2 percent	1.0 percent	11.7 percent	17.6 percent

Since 1979, workers making the lowest wages have seen the biggest decrease in earnings, while the income of the nation's wealthiest 5 percent skyrocketed by 17.6 percent.

Source: EPI



# STEERING A COURSE TO QUALITY SCHOOLS



Rising test scores in school districts around the nation are proving what teachers have known for a long time: Parent and community involvement helps children succeed in school—and unions are reaching out to these partners in new and innovative ways to help students flourish

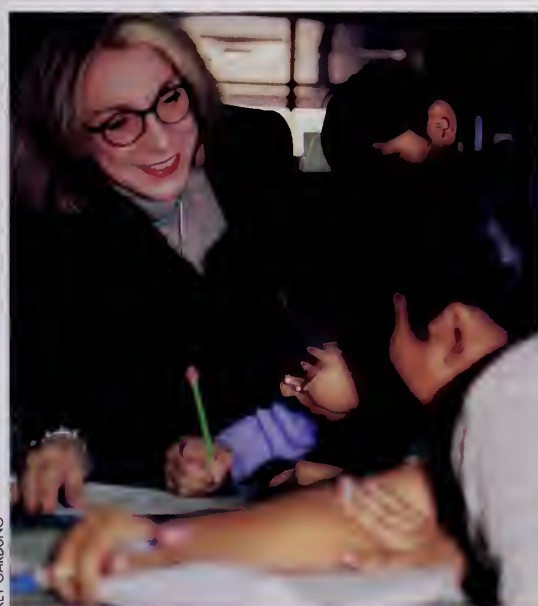
BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI ■ ILLUSTRATION BY ALEX BOIES



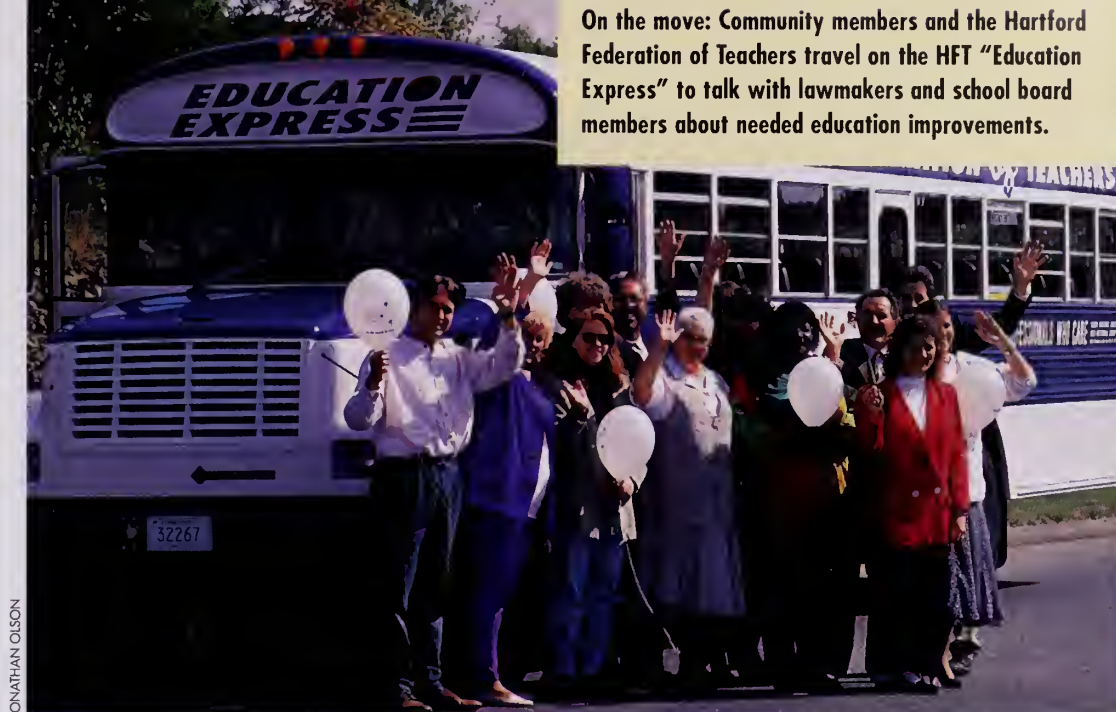
**W**hy would grown-ups voluntarily ride a school bus? Wouldn't that just bring back memories of sticking to vinyl seats and that sinking feeling from knowing you hadn't finished all of your homework? Not if the school bus is the Hartford Federation of Teachers' eye-catching blue and white HFT "Education Express." The Connecticut AFT affiliate bought the bus, painted it union colors and invited community allies to get on board and travel to the state capitol and school board meetings to prod lawmakers into making vital improvements in education.

When teachers in the struggling district sought to implement new programs to help students learn to read, they first built community support for the reform effort. Union leaders invited parents and community allies onto the bus for "field trips" to schools in other states, such as New York, to see two successful reading initiatives in action: Success for All and Direct Instruction.

"We wanted them to learn about proven programs, so we took them and showed them models," says Edwin Vargas, the local's president. "We were able to create momentum for the school board to adopt these programs—and give us professional development funds we needed to implement them."



**Communicating:** Schools improve when there is good communication and a regular exchange of ideas between teachers, families, business and community leaders, says AFT President Sandra Feldman.



JONATHAN OLSON

Union activists know communities that support schools are better places for children as well as grown-ups to learn, work and live. In a report released last fall, *Doing What Works*, AFT showed that students in some of the most troubled school districts are making—and sustaining—strong progress in reading and math. And when the community joins forces with teachers and their unions to focus on helping students read and write and grow and develop, they help children flourish.

"Recent studies have proved that schools improve in places where there is good communication and a regular exchange of ideas between teachers, families, business and community leaders," says AFT President Sandra Feldman. Neighborhoods grow stronger when the children grow up to be productive workers and knowledgeable voters—a vision only possible if kids get a good education. "It's in everyone's interest for students to do well in school," says Feldman.

Whether community activists are boarding the union bus in Hartford, walking precincts in New Orleans in support of education funding or collecting books for home libraries in Cleveland, communities are important allies in making sure the children of working families get the education they need to be successful, engaged citizens and workers.

### **Hartford, Connecticut**

Egged on by teachers, parents and community advocates, Hartford's school board adopted the two reading programs community activists visited, Success for All and Direct Instruction. Students' scores on state reading and math tests went up, improving

On the move: Community members and the Hartford Federation of Teachers travel on the HFT "Education Express" to talk with lawmakers and school board members about needed education improvements.

more in 1999 than they had in the previous four years combined. In the once-beleaguered school district, which for years languished as the lowest-performing district in the state, the teachers union played a critical role in boosting performance and supporting initiatives for better reading programs, summer school and after-school help. Working with community allies was part of building support for these successful strategies.

In getting the community on board, the Hartford Federation of Teachers also worked with a grassroots neighborhood group, Hartford Areas Rallied Together, to advocate passage of a school bond measure in November. "The schools are overcrowded and kids are eating lunch in the auditorium," says Hyacinth Yennie, chair of HART's education committee. She encouraged members of her group to pack public hearings and also highlighted the cause on a local TV talk show she hosts.

Both HART's Yennie and the union's Vargas say it is not difficult for community groups to play a role in improving local schools. "If the community members want to get involved, they have to get to know the issues and connect with other organizations working on them," she says. "Community groups need to know they don't have to reinvent the wheel," adds Vargas. "They can plug into what is already going on in their districts."

### **Fairfax County, Virginia**

Students in such urban districts as Hartford are not the only ones who benefit from community involvement. Members of the Fairfax County Federation of Teachers, another AFT affiliate, became alarmed





BRYAN S. BERTHAUX

**Partners:** Children and parents work together in after-school math and reading programs as a result of efforts by the United Teachers of New Orleans.

when reading scores started dropping in the affluent suburb of Fairfax County, Va., across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C. Since 1993, the union had been lobbying local officials for a better reading curriculum, but their efforts gained momentum in 1999 after they reached out to the community. Before school board elections in October 1999, union members leafleted Metro subway stops, handing out fliers depicting the slide in scores. The result: Voters rejected the school board member least supportive of reform and overwhelmingly voted for his opponent. Today, some schools in the district are using the revamped curriculum and student scores are improving. At Crestwood Elementary School, standardized test scores are up in all classes since last year—in some first-grade classrooms, as many as half of the students are reading at fifth-grade level. The progress is leading other board members to look more favorably on the program.

### **Shannon, North Carolina**

In rural Shannon, 20 miles southwest of Fayetteville in southeastern North Carolina, teachers at Rex Rennert Elementary School reached out to parents in 1998 after their school was declared “low performing” under a new state accountability law. Fully 59 percent of students didn’t perform at

grade level. A state assistance team fired and reassigned teachers, which made the educators feel mistreated and disrespected. The members of the North Carolina Association of Educators, a National Education Association affiliate, met the challenges in part by reaching out to parents and community members as partners in their efforts to turn the school around. They set up after-school tutoring and encouraged parents to volunteer their time to work with children and give them the opportunity to read aloud. The union held a “parent academy” to train parents how to be involved in schools and published a companion handbook.

After the students took the next round of standardized tests in May 1998—which showed 50 percent of students performing at or above grade level in math, reading and writing, up from 41 percent the year before—union members threw a huge celebration, attracting 600 parents to a daylong fair featuring carnival games, clowns, trampolines and face painting. “It ended the school year on a high note,” says Marie Evans, NCAE representative. “There was a major change the following year. Parents felt more connected to the school.” Ever since the after-school tutoring and increased parental involvement began and the fair was held, students’ scores at Rex

## **Checklist: Reaching Out to the Community**

- Identify community leaders.
- Mobilize the community around advancing quality education.
- Communicate regularly with community groups and parents.
- Develop workshops for community members on key issues and advocacy skills.
- Link school issues to broader community issues.
- Encourage parents and community members to volunteer in schools.
- Solicit the help of local elected officials.
- Work on the issues important to community allies.

Adapted from *Making Low-Performing Schools a Priority: An Association Resource Guide*, National Education Association, December 2000, available at [www.nea.org/issues/lowperf/priority/schools/](http://www.nea.org/issues/lowperf/priority/schools/) or by calling 202-822-7320. Also available: *Doing What Works: Improving Big City School Districts*, AFT, October 2000, available at [www.aft.org/edissues/downloads/dwwfinal.pdf](http://www.aft.org/edissues/downloads/dwwfinal.pdf) or by writing Andrea Odell, AFT, 555 New Jersey Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.

For other education resources on the Internet, see page 22. @



Rennert Elementary School have improved sufficiently to move the school from the point where the campus no longer is in the low-performing category.

"While teachers are instrumental in turning around schools, they can't do it alone," says John Wilson, NEA executive director, who has worked in North Carolina with Rex Rennert School. "Teachers and schools need community involvement." Because unions must help "create opportunities to show how the school can be the hub of a community," says Wilson, NEA provides training on creating partnerships between homes, schools and parents.

## New Orleans

Keeping parents and the community informed and engaged has worked for schools in New Orleans, where the number of schools on the state's original "unacceptable" list has dropped from 50 to 37. Faced with a new state law that prevents third- and seventh-graders from being promoted to the next grade if they don't pass standardized tests, United Teachers of New Orleans, an AFT affiliate, reached out to parents. For middle school students, they distributed the AFT manual *Hard Work Pays*, which focuses on the skills young teens need to develop to be successful in high school. The teachers' union distributed a regular newsletter, *ParentLinks*, to 50,000 families.

"We have expanded our mission to be more of a player in our community," says local President Brenda Mitchell.

UTNO also mobilized community allies for a political campaign championing a state tax-reform measure to raise teacher salaries, currently ranked a dismal 44th in the nation. About 20 members of Community Labor United—a coalition of unions and such progressive groups as the National Organization for Women, ACORN and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference—talked to voters in key precincts about the measure on the ballot last November. "A lot of our concerns have to do with poverty and low-wage work," says Jim Randels, a member of the coalition's coordinating committee. "When we talk about improving education, it's really about improving the quality of lives of the students in our schools." The coalition benefits from its partnership with the teachers union, says Randels, "because we get the opportunity to hear union people talk about economic issues from the workers' perspective." While voters statewide rejected the

ballot measure, a majority of voters in New Orleans supported it—thanks in part to the union-community campaign. In March, the state legislature passed a measure raising teacher salaries.



**Page turner:** Children at Tremont Elementary School are starting home libraries through a program begun by the Cleveland Teachers Union in partnership with the community.

## Cleveland

Like their counterparts in Fairfax County, members of the Cleveland Teachers Union mobilize politically to improve education, backing state legislation that would provide funds for families to build home libraries for students. But before heading to the state capitol in Columbus, union members also are laying the groundwork with a community project promoting early childhood literacy. "CTU members believe that unless kids become independent readers by age 9, they won't be able to succeed in the rest of school," say Michael Charney, CTU professional issues director. "And unions' goal is to ensure students succeed."

CTU reached out to social service agencies, religious congregations, military groups and small businesses to collect books so children at Tremont Elementary School could begin home libraries. The coalition collected more than 4,500 books for 900 children and expanded the program to the entire state legislative district. Today, many owners of McDonald's franchises have set up drop-off boxes to collect books in restaurants across northeastern Ohio. The Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor has adopted a school, as have several affiliate unions. The effort is part of a larger reform campaign in which CTU has worked with the school district to improve professional development, strengthen discipline and start a summer school program, all in anticipation of a state-imposed dead-

line next year mandating that all fourth graders must meet state reading standards to advance to the next grade. Since 1998, fourth-grade reading scores have gone up 44 percent.

Gail Long, executive director of Merrick House, a community center, says she enjoys working on projects with unions because they are adept at mobilizing their members and capitalizing on partnerships with other groups. "Educating children is a community process," Long says. And Charney adds that it's up to teachers' unions to maximize community involvement. "The community now sees the difference between a strategy to help schools, rather than random, ad hoc help," he says. "The community can target its support to focus on academic achievement." He says any union or community group can replicate Cleveland's literacy campaign. His advice: "Pick one school. Focus on children's books and reading between parents and children. Educate your members. Then get a core group to spearhead a project."

Rising test scores in school districts around the nation are proving what teachers have known for a long time: Parent and community involvement helps children succeed in school. Unions are reaching out to these partners in new and innovative ways, riding buses to state capitols, collecting books and spreading encouragement. They are seeing that community involvement solidifies the public's bond with teachers and the unions that represent them. As Hartford's Edwin Vargas puts it: "People see that the union is part of the solution because we are leaders in reform efforts." @



# Building Lifelong Unionism

BY JAMES B. PARKS

## When Doris Clark visits

her state legislators to talk about issues important to retirees and older Americans, the first thing they ask her is how many people she represents. "If it's just me, then I get put down at the bottom of the list. One person can scream her head off and nobody hears," says Clark, 85, president of AFSCME Retiree Chapter 31 in Jacksonville, Ill. "But if 250,000 say something, that makes politicians think twice because they could make or break him. That's why we have to work together if we are to have any hopes of living out our retirement in dignity."

With a record number of American workers—many of them union members—nearing or in retirement, the union movement is addressing issues that matter to older Americans and bringing more retirees into the struggle for working families' issues.

To mobilize the talents of seniors and serve as a voice for progressive public policies on behalf of working families and retirees, the AFL-CIO and community

activists this year formed the Alliance. The new organization builds on the efforts of the 250,000 members of the former National Council of Senior Citizens (NCSC), which led the campaign to establish Medicare and fought to strengthen Social Security.

The Alliance will be launched May 22 with a series of events in Washington, D.C., and other major cities. The group's leaders also will hold four regional meetings in the spring and summer and a series of in-depth meetings with former NCSC chapters and community groups and local unions, culminating in a founding meeting in Washington, D.C., in 2002.

"The union movement just doesn't have the option to call on older and retired mem-

bers for help only once every year or two when we need volunteers and votes," says AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka. "We must do a better job of integrating older and retired members, with their lifelong experience and commitment to shaping better lives for working families, into all our activities."

Older Americans make up nearly 13 percent of our total population, with 34.3 million people ages 65 and older, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In the early decades of the 21st century, our population will become older, as 70 million members of the Baby Boom generation retire. By 2005, almost 40 percent of the workforce will be older than 45. One way to keep retired

members involved is through lifelong unionism, the idea that union membership doesn't end when you retire.

"For 40 years, the National Council of Senior Citizens has served as a progressive voice for



RICK REINHARD

**Personal touch:** Doris Clark, president of AFSCME Retiree Chapter 31 in Jacksonville, Ill., an Alliance for Retired Americans activist, meets with Sen. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) at his Washington, D.C., office.

**Action for the future:** AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka says the union movement "must do a better job of integrating older and retired members, with their lifelong experience and commitment to shaping better lives for working families."



JIM DEEGAN



retired workers and the goals of the labor movement," President John Sweeney said in an Aug. 8, 2000, letter to state federations. "The new Alliance's mission and program in part will resemble those of NCSC, but they will also be different and broader."

The new organization's goal is to become a powerful new voice for retired union members and other retired workers. It will engage in legislative lobbying and member and public education on seniors' issues, and will develop a member benefits program. It will work closely with state federations and central labor councils, and is reaching out to former clubs and councils of the NCSC to recruit members and to build local and state organizations.

The concept of lifelong unionism "gives us a unique opportunity to capture the enthusiasm and skill of the Baby Boomers as retirees," and creates a place for people who care passionately about seniors' issues to speak out and take action, says George Kourpias, Alliance president and president emeritus of the Machinists. "Our members are political activists who remain active even after they retire," he says.

The Alliance will recruit nonunion members and build coalitions with the many community groups that have mutual interests with unions and union retirees, Kourpias says. In fact, one of the Alliance's two executive vice presidents is a grassroots community leader, Geoffrey Wilkinson, executive director of the Massachusetts Senior Action Council in Boston. Other officers include UAW Secretary-Treasurer Ruben Burks, who is secretary-treasurer, and Trumka, who serves as executive vice president.

Union-community coalitions will add strength to the Alliance's efforts on seniors' issues and help build support for union organizing and other actions, Burks says.

"By pulling into the Alliance all retirees—those who were union members and those who did not have the opportunity to join a union—we will have one strong voice on issues facing retirees," Burks says.

The Alliance helps both unions and the community, says Larry Huff, 73, a retired Laborers member and Alliance activist in North Las Vegas. "Our members are also members of senior citizens centers and churches and they can speak out and bring our issues to the community. We network with other groups and we can get their support."

To guarantee constant funding and a stream of new members each year, AFL-CIO affiliated unions have agreed to pay the annual dues for all their retirees—about 2.5 million this year. Nonunion members can join for \$10 per year.

The Alliance currently is launching a campaign to press Congress and the White House for passage of a Medicare prescription drug benefit, an issue that also will help identify and recruit activists and mobilize older Americans in cities and towns.

The Alliance's other

priority issues are to win universal health care for all Americans; protect and expand Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid; open up job opportunities for people older than 50; improve Older Americans Act programs and financing; clean up political campaign financing and reform election systems so that every vote counts; gain rights for patients in HMOs; and fight for workers' rights.

"This Alliance is not just about issues seniors care about, it's for working families. Let's face it, the programs older people depend on—Social Security, Medicare—are in real danger," says Ed Coyle, who began work May 1 as Alliance executive director.

Coyle, formerly the national director for the public watchdog group Radio Fair America, says: "George W. Bush is committed to privatizing Social Security and turning Medicare into a voucher program. If we don't agitate at the grassroots level to build political strength to save these programs, they will disappear for the next generation."



COURTESY ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED AMERICANS

**Alliance for Retired Americans  
President George Kourpias**

RON HOSKINS



**Senior Rally Day: Elmer Blankenship joined 1,000 seniors and union members in March at the Indiana state capitol in support of legislation to increase funding for seniors' prescription drugs.**

And that's what Elmer Blankenship, 75, wants to do. Blankenship is president of the Indiana State Council of Senior Citizens and a retired member of UAW Local 1111 in Indianapolis and Local 1122 in Gary, Ind. "The Alliance can be a very potent force right away. Seniors vote in very high numbers, and if we educate them on which politicians support working families, then they can make a difference."

Blankenship says the Alliance can bolster such activities as the March Senior Rally Day, when 1,000 seniors and union members converged on the Indiana state capitol in support of legislation to increase funding for seniors' prescription drugs.

The Alliance is all about seniors taking a stand and being heard on issues that matter, Huff says. "As we get older and our needs change, we find that we're still fighting as hard as we did when we were working," he says. "I've always been an activist. To get things you want, you just can't sit back and let someone else do it." ☐

## Get Involved

The Alliance for Retired Americans plans rallies and other actions encouraging lawmakers to pass a Medicaid prescription drug bill. The events will coincide with its launch in Washington, D.C., and New York City May 23 and Los Angeles and Chicago May 24. Actions also are planned in 20 cities the week of May 28. To find out how you can become involved with the Alliance in your city, call 888-373-6497 or visit: [www.retiredamericans.org](http://www.retiredamericans.org). ☐

**Networking: Larry Huff, a retired Laborers member, is active in the Alliance.**





COURTESY THE ROANOKE TIMES

Danny Overstreet, 43,

a member of Communications Workers of America Local

2204, was enjoying an evening with some friends at Backstreet Café in Roanoke, Va., on Sept. 22, 2000. Ronald Gay, a drifter police say had been searching for a gay bar, walked into the Backstreet Café, calmly ordered a beer and then opened fire, killing Overstreet and wounding six others. Gay, who goes on trial the week of May 21, told police he was angry about what his name had come to mean and humiliated that three of his sons had changed their last name.

Although Overstreet's death was motivated by bias against his sexual orientation, under federal law it is not considered a hate crime. The current federal hate crimes law only allows a tougher prison sentence if a violent crime is based on a person's race, religion or national origin *and* if the person is engaged in a protected federal act such as attending school or voting. The dual requirement limits the potential for federal assistance in investigating or prosecuting hate crimes, even when the crime is particularly heinous.

A bipartisan coalition in Congress has introduced a major bill, the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act of 2001 (S. 625 and H.B. 1343), that would give the U.S. Department of Justice jurisdiction over crimes of violence motivated by sexual orientation, gender or disability. Despite bipartisan support for a similar bill introduced in both houses of Congress last year, the bill was blocked by Republican leadership on the eve of elections. The AFL-CIO constituency group Pride At Work has made passage of this bill one of its top priorities.

Overstreet's death deeply affected his Verizon co-worker John Goodhart Sr., 64, a Local 2204 steward, who has dedicated himself to spreading the message that hate is unacceptable. Recently, Goodhart and three supervisors at Verizon received a corporate excellence award for their efforts in promoting tolerance. John Goodhart explains why the nation needs new hate crimes legislation.

—James B. Parks

# 'We Can't Look Away Anymore'

**Union members like John Goodhart are supporting a new bill that would expand current federal hate crimes law—and address murders like those of Goodhart's co-worker, Danny Overstreet**

## John Goodhart

Danny and I worked about 15 feet apart at Verizon. He was a good union member. Whenever there was a rally or picket line, he would be there.

He was a really likeable guy—the last person you would expect to be the victim of a violent crime. But because he was gay, he had a big bull's-eye automatically attached to his back. Ron Gay saw the bull's-eye and shot him.

I am not gay, but I am a support group leader for PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). We give support to parents of gays and lesbians, serve as an advocacy group and try to educate people about gay issues. When I heard about Danny's murder, I knew we had to do something. I called the folks in PFLAG and found out there was a vigil in Roanoke the day after the murder. I went to the store and bought flowers and some white satin ribbon and pins. We passed out the ribbons, which symbolized innocence, and pins at the vigil.

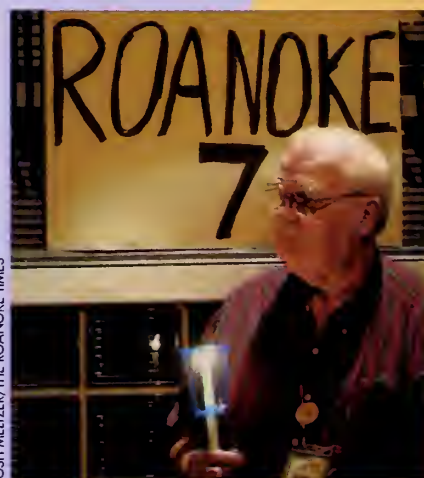
Saturday night, I made "Roanoke 7" signs and that Sunday morning after I went to church, I went to work—and the managers were cleaning off Danny's desk. I went out and bought some poster board and wrote "Danny" and "Roanoke 7" and put the signs and some ribbons and pins in the lobby. More than 250 people took the ribbons that day. Various groups and the public held vigils almost every night for a week after Danny's death.

After that, some people at work have come up to me and told me they are gay. Verizon has a strong policy forbidding discrimination against gays, but many people know that it doesn't always work. Now my gay co-workers know that I am one safe person, someone who will support them in the building. We hold workshops and seminars in the Roanoke area telling people about the problems gays and lesbians face and promoting tolerance.

I was invited last year to speak at an anti-hate crime rally in Washington, D.C. In my speech I said that we, as a society, tell the Ronald Gays of the world that we have laws against murder, but that we wink when it's gays that get killed. That's a disgrace.

That's why we need a new hate crimes law. The polls show that people don't believe in hurting those who are different, but we don't do anything about it when it happens. A hate crimes bill would send a message that it's not OK to hurt people who are different and it would give those who say they don't believe in hate legal backing to say to the Ronald Gays that we can't look away anymore when gays are killed. We will not approve of that kind of thing any more.

For more information and to send a message to your representative in support of the bill, click on [www.unitedagainsthate.org](http://www.unitedagainsthate.org).



JOSH MEITZER/THE ROANOKE TIMES

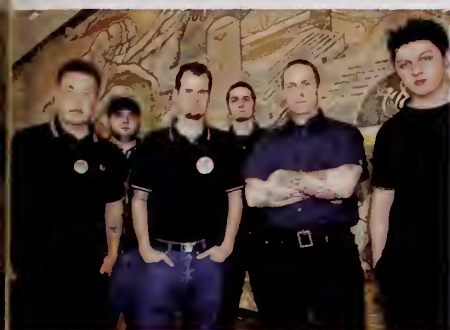
Never forget: CWA Local 2204 member John Goodhart helped organize candlelight vigils commemorating co-worker Danny Overstreet.



## Working-Class Punk with Conscience

In the 1940s and 1950s, when John Kelly was a Longshoremen organizer on the sometimes rough and sometimes rowdy Boston docks, he probably never thought his grandson would carry on his memory by singing about his work on piers. Ken Casey does just that in the sometimes rowdy and always loud bars and clubs where the Dropkick Murphys make their music and their living.

The Dropkick Murphys, a Boston working-class, Irish-influenced punk band, have an international following and a solid reputation as a band that believes in worker and racial justice. Many of their songs are about the everyday struggles of the working-class men and women they grew up with in Boston.



During a two-month, coast-to-coast tour, members of the Dropkick Murphys stopped by for a performance at the AFL-CIO. Casey is second from left.

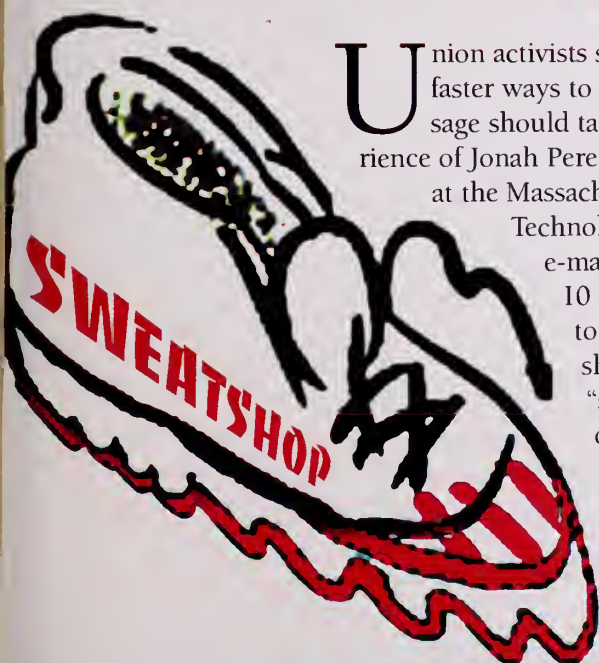
"I saw [my grandfather] dedicate his life to helping people, working with the Longshoremen. It was more than a job for him," Casey says. "These guys, the working people, need someone to stand up for them."

The Dropkick Murphys, who performed a set of unplugged music in March at the AFL-CIO in Washington, D.C., combine a straight-from-the-gut, three-chord guitar attack and a fierce punk rhythm with penny whistles and Celtic jigs and reels.

The band's most recent release, "Sing Loud, Sing Proud" includes a rousing interpretation of the union classic, "Which Side Are You On?"

To order CDs or find out more, visit [www.dropkickmurphys.com](http://www.dropkickmurphys.com). And for a look at the Dropkick Murphys' AFL-CIO performance, go to [www.dropkickmurphys.com/photos/images/slsp/dcaflcio.html](http://www.dropkickmurphys.com/photos/images/slsp/dcaflcio.html). @

## NIKE WON'T DO IT—BUT E-MAIL WILL



Union activists seeking better and faster ways to spread the union message should take a look at the experience of Jonah Peretti, a graduate student at the Massachusetts Institute of

Technology. What began as an e-mail Peretti forwarded to 10 friends about his effort to buy personalized Nike shoes with the word "sweatshop" stitched on them ended up—in the words of one national magazine—"a global news event."

The e-mail that bounced around the world began when Peretti took up Nike's offer to personalize shoes. After Peretti ordered his shoes from the Nike website, the company sent him a form letter, refusing to fill his order, because, "Your personal I.D. contains profanity or inappropriate slang."

Peretti countered, "I chose the I.D. because I wanted to remember the toil and labor of the children that made my shoes. Could you please ship them to me immediately."

Several exchanges later, Nike officials wrote Peretti they would not personalize shoes with anything "inappropriate"—and didn't bother responding to his final request:

"Could you please send me a color snapshot of the 10-year-old Vietnamese girl who makes my shoes?"

Peretti forwarded the entire correspondence to his friends, but the e-mail spread across the Internet, grabbing the attention of major media outlets. The story appeared in *Time* magazine, the *Village Voice*, *The Wall Street Journal* and on the "Today Show," where Peretti appeared with a Nike representative in late February.

Peretti says the exchange of e-mails has opened his eyes to the power of the Internet as an organizing tool: "The Internet is a way to counterbalance Nike's advertising and can be used in campaigns for social justice." @

## Serving Up Union Quality at the White House

When George W. Bush sits down at the White House as host of a state dinner, the nation's most anti-union president in recent history is served on all-union White House china made by Glass, Molders, Pottery and Plastics Workers. The Local 236A members work at Lenox China in Lawrenceville, N.J.

The 12-piece place settings (all 300) are a \$240,000 gift from the White House Historical Association that debuted last November at a dinner marking the 200th anniversary of the president's residence.

Dishing up the new pattern: former First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, who worked



closely with Lenox designers to create the cream-colored china. Lenox, which also designed china for Presidents Wilson, Roosevelt, Truman and Reagan, says the Clinton pattern departs from tradition by replacing primary colors with pale shades, replacing the presidential seal with an image of the White House and offering a different pattern on each place setting.

Bruce Crowe, Local 236A president, says "it's always a proud feeling to have presidents eating off of our china," but adds:

"It's a real shame to see some of the actions Bush has taken against workers early on. Maybe by eating off of our china, he can see the quality of products made by workers in the U.S. Perhaps something good may come out of this. After all, who appreciates the finer things in life better than the rich?"

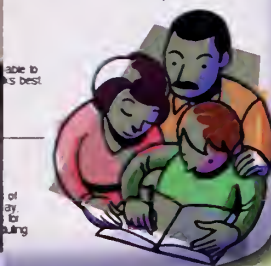
Bon appetit. @



Parent Page  
About AFT Contact AFT

are of the utmost importance  
of our students and our

Smaller classes



## Connecting Schools and Communities

**W**orking families want to make sure their children get the best education possible. Union Internet sites offer extensive information and resources for parents, communities and unions seeking to help children succeed in school and beyond.

## Resources for Parents

**www.aft.org/parentpage**—AFT's Parent Page guides parents through practical, day-to-day needs such as making the most of parent-teacher conferences and helping kids with homework. The site also provides materials to engage parents in issues that affect the quality of their children's education, such as high academic standards and school building modernization.

**www.nea.org/helpfrom/connecting/tools**—*Tools You Can Use: Parents and Teachers Working Together* is an online guide from the National Education Association describing steps parents can take to help their children succeed in school.

**www.pta.org**—The National Parent Teacher Association features message boards and e-mail listservs for activists who want to improve their children's schools. It also keeps parents abreast of legislation in Washington, D.C., that affects schools and children.

**www.ncpie.org**—The National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education focuses on developing effective partnerships between families and schools. Its website offers guidelines for schools on designing effective partnerships, a toolkit to encourage involvement of fathers and more.

**www.projectappleseed.org**—Project Appleseed offers tools to galvanize mothers and fathers to be more active in their children's schools. The site also provides links to e-mail listservs of interest to parents.

**www.edweek.org/context/topics/issuespage.cfm?id=12**—*Education Week*, a weekly news and analysis magazine, brings together its most recent articles on parental involvement. ☐

## Resources for Union—Community Connections

**www.nea.org/partners/pocket.html**—Recognizing that neighborhoods and the broader community can provide powerful learning opportunities that complement school and family efforts to educate children, the NEA published *Building Partnerships for Student Learning*, an online guide for effective union outreach to community partners.

**www.cisnet.org**—Communities in Schools is a clearinghouse of programs connecting community organizations and schools. Each CIS project offers young people a community of tutors, mentors, health care providers and career counselors—caring adults who can help them to help themselves.

**http://pfie.ed.gov**—Involvement in Education, a project of the federal Education Department, sponsors a website with

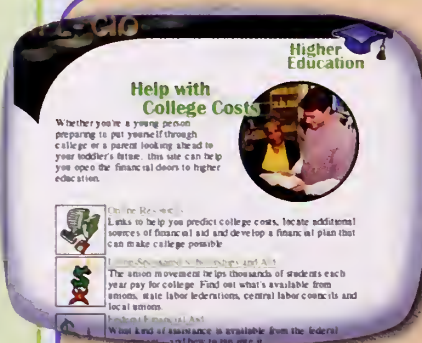
information on getting community groups involved in schools. It includes the online guide *Seven Tips to Building a Successful Partnership*.

**www.connectforkids.org**—Connect for Kids, a site sponsored by several foundations, offers resources for adults—parents, grandparents, educators, policy-makers and others—seeking to volunteer with kids in mind. Parents and community activists can sign up for monthly or weekly e-mail newsletters.

**www.communityschools.org**—The Coalition for Community Schools is a national organization that encourages programs that make schools the hub of communities, “open to students, families and the community before, during and after school, seven days a week, all year long.” Its “tools” section offers practical, step-by-step plans on how to make that vision real.

**www.ncea.com**—The National Community Education Association is a leadership training organization for professionals active in school-community partnerships. Visit the website for specialized workshops and magazines. There's also information on forming community partnerships to address community needs and expand lifelong learning opportunities for all community residents.

**www.childrensdefense.org/parentsresourcenetwork.htm**—The Children's Defense Fund provides links to resources for parents who want to help their own children grow up to be healthy, educated adults and also to get involved with helping children in their community. ☐



## Family Time at www.aflcio.org

• **Homework Helpers.** If your child is puzzled by a math problem or needs reference materials for a book report, these links to “homework helper” sites can come to the rescue. They include online bulletin boards for help with math problems and lots of reference materials.

• **Help with College Costs.** Find a comprehensive list of union-sponsored scholarships, as well as information on federal financial aid and tips on planning for that two- or four-year degree.

• **Child Care.** Check out this section for information on the fight for top-notch child care and related links to child care resources in your community.

Also check out [www.aflcio.org/education](http://www.aflcio.org/education), where you can find:

- News about the ways unions are taking the lead in improving public schools.
- Information on what you can do to ensure school districts can build, repair and modernize schools for the 21st century.
- Comprehensive Web links to education improvement organizations, key government agencies, financial aid services and guides to teaching and learning. ☐

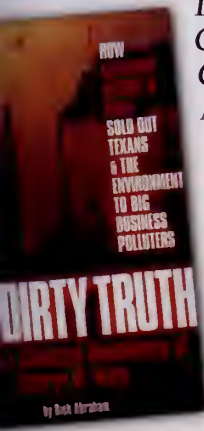




## EXHIBIT

"Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives: 100 Years of Labor in New York City" exhibits 120 photographs that powerfully depict New York City's working people and is on display at the George Meany Memorial Archives through June 24. Drawn primarily from the work of labor photographers, the images show the men and women who built New York City during the 20th century—from sweatshop workers to construction crews building Wall Street. Curators for the exhibit, Debra Bernhardt and Rachel Bernstein, recently wrote a 240-page book that includes many of the photos, *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives: A Pictorial History of New York City's Working People*, available at [www.nyupress.nyu.edu/labor](http://www.nyupress.nyu.edu/labor). Bernhardt, 47, a noted labor archivist, died of cancer in March. For directions and more information, call 301-431-5451. ☐

## PUBLICATIONS



**The Dirty Truth: The Oil & Chemical Dependency of George W. Bush**, by Rick Abraham, reveals Bush's dismal environmental record and a back-room-style government that grants special access to Big Business polluters and political contributors. Abraham says Bush's corporate advocacy adversely affected Texas's air and water quality—and Bush signed into law a measure

shifting the cost of hazardous waste site cleanup from polluters to taxpayers. \$12.95. Mainstream Publishers. For a price break on multiple copies, visit [www.mainstreampublishers.com](http://www.mainstreampublishers.com).

**The Triangle Fire**, by Leon Stein, is a reissue of Stein's gripping portrayal of the tragic March 25, 1911, fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist factory in which more than 145 workers died. Stein's straightforward, highly descriptive narrative is woven together as skillfully as a well-edited documentary film demonstrating that the nation's worst industrial tragedy didn't have to happen. \$15.95. ILR Press/Cornell University Press, [www.cornellpress.cornell.edu](http://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu), or contact Andrea Fleck Clardy at Cornell University Press, 607-277-2338, ext. 230.



**The Heat: Steelworker Lives and Legends**, edited by poet Jimmy Santiago Baca, is a collection of 33 short stories, vignettes and poems written by Steelworkers members. The book grew out of a writing workshop Baca led in 1999 for the union's Institute for Career Development, which provides education and training for USWA members nationwide. With a foreword by recently retired USWA President George Becker, the book highlights the writers' personal experiences and family histories with the mills, painting a portrait of the industry's past 75 years. \$15. Send a check or money order to the Institute for Career Development, Suite 301 South, 1000 E. 80th Place, Merrillville, Ind. 46410. Call 888-291-8003 or visit [www.icd-uswasteelco.org](http://www.icd-uswasteelco.org). Allow 4–6 weeks for delivery. ☐

## EXECUTIVE PAYWATCH UPDATE

The AFL-CIO's popular Executive PayWatch website now features "e-campaigns" aimed at Bank of America, Consecro and Sprint—companies in which CEOs easily could be poster boys for excessive pay and lackluster performance. A visit to [www.aflcio.org/paywatch](http://www.aflcio.org/paywatch) enables you to e-mail the companies' boards of directors and let them know your views on runaway CEO pay and the widening income gap. The updated Executive PayWatch now features an online board game that enables visitors to see what it's like to be a CEO bargaining for more pay—for example: "Put your brother-in-law on the board of directors, pocket a \$2 million raise." ☐



## MOVIE

**Bread and Roses** opens in May. The struggle by janitors to gain dignity on the job and wages to support their families has been captured on film in a major motion picture directed by Ken Loach and released by Lions Gate Films. *Bread and Roses* opens May 8 in Los Angeles; May 17 in San Francisco; May 30 in Chicago; and May 31 in New York City.

Based on the SEIU Justice for Janitors campaign in Los Angeles, the film depicts the hard-fought efforts by workers to get a voice on the job, and includes real footage from the 1990 attack on janitors by Los Angeles police during a peaceful demonstration in which 60 janitors and their supporters were injured.

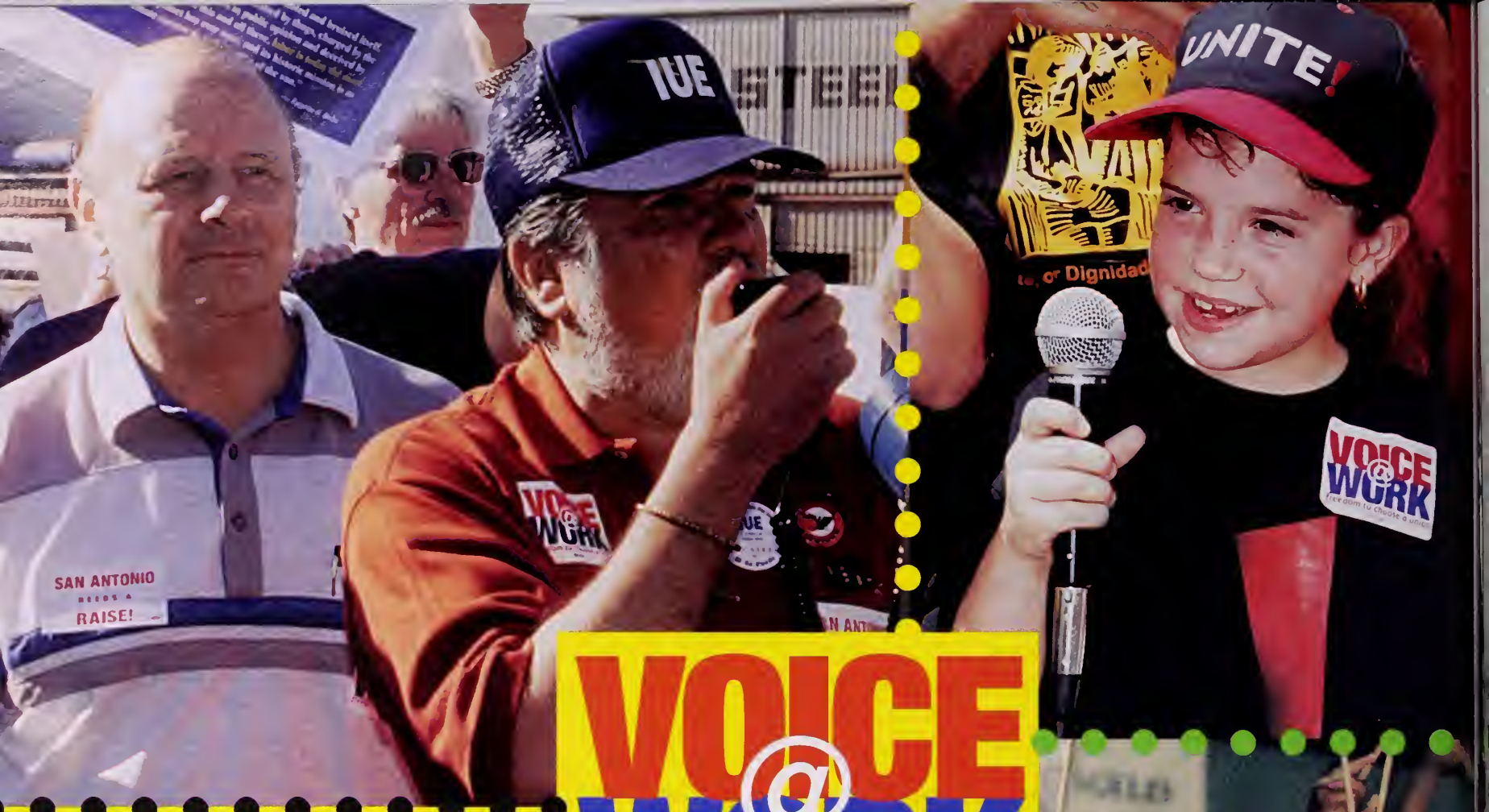
SEIU is coordinating events with openings in each city and arranging special screenings in other cities. A preview of the film for screening at union meetings or events is available by calling SEIU at 202-898-3334, and ads in PDF format can be downloaded from [www.seiu.org/seiu\\_ads](http://www.seiu.org/seiu_ads). For more information, e-mail SEIU at [giostad@seiu.org](mailto:giostad@seiu.org). ☐

**unionlabor**  
**unionquality**  
**UNIONPRIDE**

SHOW THE PRIDE

Want to let the world know a job is being done with union labor, quality and pride? The AFL-CIO has created a new logo affiliate unions can use for postings at union job sites. To receive a copy by e-mail, phone 202-637-5388. ☐





# VOICE @ WORK

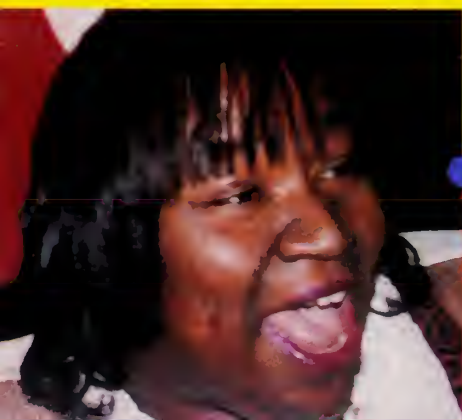
**7 DAYS IN JUNE**

**Coming to your community  
SAVE THE DATES**

From **JUNE 9 TO JUNE 16**, workers and their supporters will speak out for the freedom to choose a voice at work.

*7 Days in June* is a national week of action sponsored by the AFL-CIO. It is a week when unions join together to expose employers who block our freedom to join a union. Join the unions of the AFL-CIO, central labor councils, state federations and community allies as we organize *7 Days in June*. We will mobilize our members, hold marches, forums and hearings in communities across the country. We will stand with workers who are fighting to gain a voice at work. Help plan an event in your community. Make

this year's *7 Days in June*  
the best ever.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION** or to organize an event, call Enid Eckstein at 617-557-5488, ext. 4 or visit: [www.aflcio.org/voiceatwork/7daysinjune.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/voiceatwork/7daysinjune.htm)



Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

JUNE 2001

# America @rk

**ALSO INSIDE:**

**Ready to Retire?**

**Opening Doors  
for Global Fairness**

**Turning Charity  
into Solidarity**

# Bargaining to Organize



**"BEST ISSUE** [April 2001] ever. Your thorough presentation of one subject, like the Wal-Mart campaign...is informative and helpful as we build the movement."

—Bill Anderson, *Painters and Allied Trades*, Washington, D.C.

## SAY WHAT?

**How is your union bargaining to help workers organize?**

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's Say What? Selected responses will appear in a future issue of *America@work*. 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; phone: 202-637-5010; fax: 202-508-6908; e-mail: [atwork@afcio.org](mailto:atwork@afcio.org).

## HERE'S WHAT YOU SAY

### ABOUT HOW YOUR UNION IS FIGHTING AGAINST CORPORATE IRRESPONSIBILITY TO HELP WORKERS GET A VOICE AT WORK:

"In our union's ongoing drive for better patient care and a real voice at work, the 9,000 members who work at acute care hospitals in Northern California have carried on a vigorous strategic campaign against California's largest hospital chains, Sutter Health and Catholic Healthcare West. Members have worked hard to organize, enlist and engage widespread support of labor, community, religious and activist organizations for our campaign. SEIU Local 250's research department has pinpointed how corporate take-overs bleed independent and community hospitals of needed funds and resources.... We've presented evidence so compelling that our elected officials at the local and state levels have been forced by public pressure to take action.... Most important, our campaign is succeeding to directly benefit members and patients."—Jerry Holl, *SEIU Local 250*, Northern California

**"I WORK AT** a Wal-Mart. I hate it. Anyway, a friend gave me the April 2001 issue of *America@work*, the one with the Wal-Mart stories....The stories are so very true. It's very sad the American public thinks that Wal-Mart is just the greatest store. How come these stories haven't been published in a regular magazine, like *Redbook* or *McCall's*? The lady in the Las Vegas store who is trying to get the union there...Wal-Mart will probably get rid of her if this takes place. They won't use that reason, but they will find another reason. Tell her to be very careful."—Name and location withheld by request

**"I ENJOYED READING** the Wal-Mart article in the April issue. I was thinking that with the high turnover rate at Wal-Mart, it would be easy for the union to send a group of retirees to [organize] a Wal-Mart store....If I was retired and didn't have to worry about my income, I'd be happy to sign up, just to see the stores organized."—Name withheld by request, employee of Fortune 500 company

**"TODAY I HEARD** a prominent economist on a financial TV network say: 'Business uses labor as inventory on the shelf' [to explain] layoffs that increase profits and the reason for high productivity. Let's give the rich a big tax cut so they can reduce their inventory (labor), service [and] quality and increase the price of their product! All to fill their overflowing pockets! I dislike clichés, but the 'rich get richer and the poor get poorer' is still true."—Russell Eichmann, *Machinists (retired)*, Vacaville, Calif.

**AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in *America@work*.**



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## NO SWEAT IN NEW YORK CITY

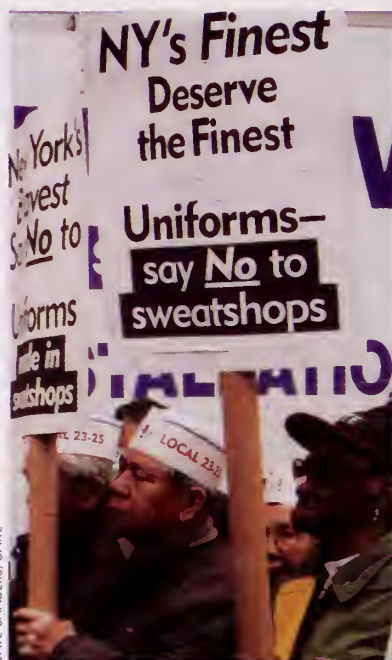
Union and other anti-sweatshop activists in New York City won passage of a first-of-its-kind ordinance ensuring that none of the nearly \$70 million in taxpayer dollars spent on city uniforms each year goes to sweatshops.

"Lots of uniforms are purchased by tax dollars and those dollars should be supporting good jobs," says Dan Hennefeld of UNITE.

UNITE drafted and promoted the ordinance, which requires any producer of apparel for the city to certify that it pays wages at least above the poverty line for a family of four. The producer also must certify where the clothing was made and attest that it is obeying all the relevant environmental, wage, health and safety laws.

Before a sale is complete, the producer also must certify where the clothing was made, the location of any subcontractors and suppliers and that it is obeying all the relevant environmental, wage, health and safety laws.

If a company files a false report, the city could issue a



DAVE SANDERS/UNITE

**Uniform law: Union members and their allies rally in New York City.**

fine, sue for civil damages or bar the manufacturer from doing business with the city. If the city requests it, the manufacturer must allow independent monitoring of the plant. The City Council passed the ordinance March 14 and overrode Republican Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's veto April 25.

For more information, visit [www.uniteunion.org](http://www.uniteunion.org). ☐

## Council Rallies in Support of Immigrant Workers

Meeting in Boston in May, the AFL-CIO Executive Council called for expanded political and legislative mobilization, rallied for immigrant workers' rights and a living wage for Harvard University workers and condemned a presidential Social Security privatization panel.

The political and legislative mobilization strategy approved by the council is modeled after the successful worker-to-worker communication effort of Labor 2000. Worksite fliers and other information for working families are available on the AFL-CIO website for local unions, labor councils and state federations ([www.aflcio.org/workingfamiilestookit](http://www.aflcio.org/workingfamiilestookit)).

At a massive march and rally sponsored by the Massachusetts General Amnesty Coalition May 1, council members joined Massachusetts AFL-CIO officers and hundreds of union members, immigrant rights activists and community groups in calling for justice and amnesty for immigrant workers.

Executive Council members and officers also traveled to nearby Cambridge, where they took part in a rally at Harvard University in support of students engaged in a sit-in to demand a living wage for campus workers.

Harvard students ended the sit-in victoriously a week later, after the administration agreed to form a living wage committee with activists to study and recommend options for boosting wages.

In other action, council members slammed President George W. Bush's appointment of a pro-privatization Social Security commission, calling Bush's move to replace Social Security benefits with private accounts dependent upon the stock market "an enormous threat to the retirement security of working families." ☐



RICK FRIEDMAN

**Amnesty: Union members and AFL-CIO Executive Council members in Boston rallied in support of immigrant workers' rights.**

## Preventing School Violence

With news of campus shootings tragically becoming more common, parents increasingly worry about the safety of their children in school. To address potential student violence, AFT leaders conduct workshops for school personnel (including bus drivers, cafete-

ria workers and teachers' aides) on helping students resolve conflicts and spotting the early warning signs of potential violence.

"The safety of kids is the first responsibility of our members," says John Mitchell, AFT deputy director of educational issues. "When kids get on the

school bus or walk into school, the responsibility for them shifts from the parents to the school district, so it is important that all adults at a school be involved in school safety."

For the past year, AFT peer-trainers have held workshops at union conferences and semi-annual training institutes, offering strategies on instilling day-to-day discipline and

respect—for instance, posting safety rules on school buses and rewarding children who follow them. They also help their co-workers recognize early-warning signs from students who may become violent, such as withdrawing from their friends and talking about their intentions to do harm. "Children need adults to listen to them," says Mitchell. ☐



# Airline Interference Doesn't Fly

President George W. Bush's threat to prevent airline strikes this year by appointing presidential emergency boards (PEBs)—a route used

in the airline industry only one time in the past 34 years before Bush appointed one in March—put him clearly on the side of the airlines, says Sonny Hall, president of the Transport Workers and the AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department.

Bush's threat is "highly inappropriate," said Hall, speaking before the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee April 25.

Machinists President Thomas Buffenbarger called on Congress to support fair and evenhanded collective bargaining to resolve long-running negotiations and to insert a "drop-dead date" into the Railway Labor Act that governs airline negotiations to "give both sides an incentive to reach a fair agreement."



Capitol Hill: TWU President Sonny Hall (left) and IAM President Thomas Buffenbarger condemned Bush's threat to appoint presidential emergency boards in the airline industry.



## There's Still Time to Nominate a Union City

In nominating the Wichita/Hutchinson Labor Federation of Central Kansas for its work in creating a Union City, Douglas Grant, a member of Machinists Local Lodge 774 in Wichita, says the labor council "gives no endorsement to [any political candidate] who does not believe in the right to organize and be represented by labor."

Further, Grant writes, the council "holds elected officials accountable, especially when labor helped get them elected."

Wichita/Hutchinson is among more than 50 labor councils nominated so far as part of the AFL-CIO's effort to recognize central labor councils with strong Union Cities programs.

Since 1997, 162 central labor councils have committed to the seven-point Union Cities program aimed at revitalizing the union movement at the grassroots level through organizing, political action and coalition-building. This year, a top Union City, drawn from among the nominations, will be announced at the national AFL-CIO convention in December in Las Vegas, after a meeting of Union Cities central labor councils.

Prior to the convention, AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney, Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka and Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson, joined by a delegation of international union leaders, will tour the "finalist" Union Cities.

It's not too late to nominate a Union City. You can do it online at [www.aflcio.org/unioncity](http://www.aflcio.org/unioncity) or fax the nomination to the AFL-CIO Field Mobilization Department at 202-637-5012.

## SPOTLIGHT

# Detroit Casinos Council Plays a Winning Hand

When Detroit voters legalized casino gambling in 1998, four unions joined together in a coordinated effort to help all workers in the entire industry organize—resulting in all 6,600 casino workers in the city winning a voice at work. Most recently, the 2,600 employees of the Greektown Casino signed up in an April card-check recognition (in which an employer agrees to recognize the union after a majority of workers sign union authorization cards).

The Greektown win is the third for the four unions in the Detroit Casinos Council: Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 24, Operating Engineers Local 547, Teamsters Local 372 and UAW Local 7777.

"We're pleased that Greektown Casino, like MGM and Motor City, decided to treat their workers fairly and recognize their right to join a union. We've all worked together to get our local gaming industry off to a great start," says UAW President Stephen Yokich.

Multiunion organizing campaigns maximize resources and increase membership—and the coordinated strategy worked especially well in union-strong Detroit, says HERE President John Wilhelm. The unions minimized possible conflicts by determining in advance specific roles for the council and each of the unions, and by deciding which group of workers each union will organize.

"Having four unions adds greater resources and a lot of knowledge to the campaign," says Veronica Stephenson, an IBT international representative.

Under the agreement, HERE represents the food and beverage staff, slot change workers and porters; IUOE represents engineering staff; IBT represents delivery and transportation staff, PBX operators, retail clerks, warehouse workers and landscapers; and the UAW represents dealers and gaming and finance employees.

"Because we were able to work together, we could address the concerns of all the workers, and not just one group," says Phil Schloop, IUOE Local 547 business manager.

Multiunion campaigning may not be effective in all cases, Wilhelm says, but it is a good tool to use when possible. "There are so many forces arrayed against working people that we have to join forces to survive. Multiunion organizing is one good way of coming together."



REBECCA COOK/UAW SOLIDARITY

Winning bet: Postia Varner, a slot floor worker in Detroit's Greektown, celebrates a voice at work with the UAW.



# Carrying on the Fight for Living Wages

A victorious three-week-long sit-in begun in April by Harvard University students and supported by union and community members seeking a living wage for janitors, cafeteria workers and other campus staff is just the latest effort by union activists and their allies to ensure taxpayer dollars are not being used to perpetuate poverty-level wages (see story, page 4). So far, union-community campaigns have brought living wage laws to nearly 50 communities across the country.

Through the efforts of the Rochester (N.Y.) and Vicinity Labor Council, the city council in January passed an ordinance requiring contractors to pay city service contract workers at least \$8.52 an hour

(\$9.52 if health benefits aren't provided). The labor council mobilized affiliates to distribute postcards at worksites supporting a living wage.

A successful living wage initiative in Detroit in 1998 has spawned winning campaigns in five surrounding suburbs, which most recently resulted in new ordinances in Ferndale and Eastpoint. "When a living wage ordinance passed in Detroit, city officials made it clear to us that we couldn't have it just in our community, so we took up their challenge," says Shawn Ellis, spokesman for the Metropolitan Detroit AFL-CIO, which worked with the Huron Valley Central Labor Council.

In Missoula, Mont., such unions as the Montana Fed-



**Degree of justice:** AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka joined a May rally supporting Harvard students seeking a living wage for janitors, cafeteria workers and other campus staff.

eration of Teachers and Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 27 joined with Montana Peoples Action, an affiliate of Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN). They campaigned for a \$7.95-an-hour wage rate

for employees of businesses that get grants and subsidies from the city. Secky Fascione, HERE Local 427 secretary-treasurer, says the campaign helped win new allies, who now are supporting a hotel organizing campaign. ☐

## Teamsters Seek to Open Up Airborne's Board of Directors

In a move to bring more democracy to corporate governance at Airborne Express, the nation's third-largest overnight delivery service employing more than 9,000 IBT members, the Teamsters General Fund co-sponsored a successful shareholder resolution to put the board of directors up for an annual vote.

At the April Airborne shareholders meeting in Seattle, the proposal to "declassify" the board was approved by more than 50 percent. Currently, the board is elected in staggered groups, every three or four years. An annual election would make the board more responsive to shareholders, union leaders say. The vote was the third time shareholders acted to

declassify the board, which has not enacted the proposals.

"If the board does not take the necessary steps to declassify the board," says Louis Malizia, assistant director of the IBT Office of Corporate Affairs, "the Teamsters General Fund will promote either withholding votes from the directors or promoting candidates to the board who will be responsive to the shareholders."

For more information, visit [www.teamster.org](http://www.teamster.org). IBT's recent proposal is among growing shareholder mobilization efforts for a larger voice in corporate decisions. For information about current shareholder campaigns, visit [www.aflcio.org/paywatch](http://www.aflcio.org/paywatch). ☐

## Child Poverty on the Rise in Working Families

Some 12.1 million children are poor, and most live in homes where at least one parent in the household works, according to the *State of America's Children Yearbook 2001*.

Released April 19 by the Children's Defense Fund, the report finds that one in six American children lives in poverty, and that 2.4 million, or 26 percent of poor children, lived in extreme poverty in 1999, up from 21 percent in 1996.

Although more Americans have found employment in recent years, many of those jobs don't pay enough to benefit working families' children. According to the report, the proportion of poor children living in households in which someone works continues to climb—78 percent in 1999, up from 61 percent in 1993.

According to CDF President Marian Wright Edelman, "Child poverty is our choice—the moral and political choice that our nation continues to make year after year," even while many citizens enjoy "the wealthiest time in American history with a \$10 trillion economy and eight years of unprecedented economic growth."

The report, including shipping, is \$21.45 (\$22.37 for Washington, D.C. residents). To order, call 202-662-3652; fax credit card orders to 202-628-8333; or send a check to CDF Publications, P.O. Box 90500, Washington, D.C. 20090-0500. ☐



# All-American, Union-Built Ballpark

**B**ricklayers member Dave Needom doesn't usually have 30,000 people watching him perform, but at a special preseason game, the Milwaukee Local 8 member hit every note of "The Star-Spangled Banner" as precisely as he had laid thousands of bricks in the Milwaukee Brewers' new baseball home, Miller Park.

At the March 31 game, the Brewers honored the 4,500 men and women who built the retro-looking, state-of-the-art ballpark. During the pregame ceremonies, members from the more than 30 unions who built the stadium under a project labor agreement lined the basepaths as fans responded with a standing ovation.

The crowd also observed a moment of silence for the three Iron Workers Local 8 members killed in a 1999 crane collapse and for a Plumbers and Pipe Fitters member who suffered a fatal heart attack on the job.



CAROL CASAMENTO

**Home of the brave:** Bricklayers member Dave Needom sings the national anthem at the new Milwaukee Brewers stadium.

In a fitting tribute to those workers, Jack Kangas, a 30-year member of Iron Workers Local 8, threw out the first pitch. It was the only union strike during the four-year project. @

## OUT FRONT

**A**t 83 and widowed, Mrs. H of Monroe, Ga., tries to get by on \$691 a month in Social Security payments. Utilities and \$283 a month for medicine leave her just \$158 to buy food and meet all her other needs.

Prescription drugs cost Ms. T of Springfield, Ill., \$4,000 a year. Over a decade, that's added up to \$40,000—consuming most of her life savings. And 71-year-old Mr. S of Medford, Ore., has returned to work so he can pay his \$2,760-a-year medication costs.\*

Every day, the older Americans who built this country and raised us face impossible choices: Pay for the prescription drugs they require to survive or buy food? Wipe out the savings that were supposed to bring comfort in old age or force a tired body back out to work?

Today our country looks forward to a federal budget surplus that could fund a prescription drug benefit for seniors under Medicare—one of America's most successful social programs—while meeting equally important needs of our children and providing targeted tax relief for working-age people.

Instead, President George W. Bush and the Republican leadership in Congress have ramrodded through a federal budget that has as its centerpiece a massive millionaire tax cut. While giving 33 percent of its benefits to the richest 1 percent of taxpayers, Bush's budget and tax plan deprives older Americans of real help for prescription drug costs, sticks children with crumbling schools and leaves working families with dwindling health coverage.

Our union movement is part of a massive coalition of faith, child advocacy, civil rights and other organizations battling these injustices. Last month, a powerful new ally emerged when the Alliance for Retired Americans was launched. The Alliance means business—its 2.5 million union retirees and members of community-based senior groups are veterans of activism for social and economic justice. When you look in your history books, theirs are the faces you see on picket lines, at rallies and at Rose Garden bill signings that ushered in so many federal and state rights we now take for granted.

The Alliance for Retired Americans is determined to win a meaningful Medicare prescription drug benefit—not the sham alternative Bush has proposed, which would be offered short-term, at the option of states, to only the very poorest seniors—and through private providers rather than the proven Medicare program.

Our unions are in this fight all the way. The people who gave everything to this country and our working families deserve nothing less.

\*From *The Profit in Pills: A Primer on Prescription Drug Prices* by the Alliance for Retired Americans. @

## We Need a Medicare Drug Benefit—Now



RICK FRIEDMAN

BY JOHN J. SWEENEY

## TEDDY BEARS FOR TYKES

The New York City Firefighters' Hockey Team (members of the Uniform Firefighters Association of Greater New York, Fire Fighters Local 94) teamed

up with the national Firefighter Ministries to set up a local Teddy Bears for Tykes chapter. The program provides teddy bears to comfort the children of firefighters killed or injured in the line of duty, children left homeless by fire or other disasters and children who are burn victims.

To donate, send a check or money order payable to NYC Firefighters' Hockey Team to Steve Doyle, FDNY Hockey Team, 9-B, 14 Washington Place, New York, N.Y. 10003. Also, visit the website at [www.teddybearsfortykes.com](http://www.teddybearsfortykes.com). @







MARIA ELLEN HUEBNER

# Bargain



JIM WEST

**Direct connection:** Valerie Seabrooks (right) joined CWA Local 4100 in Detroit through a card-check process negotiated by Holly Butler (above) and the CWA Local 4603 negotiating team in Milwaukee.

**H**olly Butler and Valerie Seabrooks never have met each other. And yet, like many union members, they are bound together in an innovative strategy that helps working men and women get

fair wages, decent working conditions and a voice on the job.

In 1997, Butler was a local phone service representative at Ameritech in Milwaukee, a subsidiary of telecommunications giant SBC. As a member of the negotiating team for Communications Workers of America Local 4603, she fought for a clause in the contract that allows workers in the growing, high-tech—and nonunion—divisions of the company to organize into a union simply by signing cards. Such “card-check” recognition enables workers to avoid a lengthy election process—during which employer interference with workers’ efforts to gain a voice at work is common (see box, page 10).

“We wanted to make sure there are union jobs in the future, with fair wages, benefits and treatment,” says Butler. “Eventually, there may not be land-line phones, so we talked to members about securing the jobs of the future, such as high-speed data and cellular. All of those were nonunion,” she says.

Nearly 300 miles away across Lake Michigan in Detroit, Seabrooks is a payment services consultant at Cingular Wireless, the company created in October 2000 when SBC and BellSouth merged wireless operations. This year, she signed a card indicating she wanted to join CWA Local 4100. In large part because of the agreement for which Butler had fought, Cingular recognized the union after a majority of her fellow employees also signed cards. The eight-month campaign was a stark contrast to workers’ earlier

unionization attempts at Cingular, which failed after the company fired a worker active in organizing—and far faster than the nine years it took to win two elections at Ameritech in Milwaukee.

“There wasn’t that same fear and intimidation,” says Seabrooks. “The company told us we could make our own decision, and that took a lot of the fear away.” Seabrooks says she and her colleagues did not have to endure mandatory anti-union meetings, one-on-one pressure from supervisors or thinly veiled threats—unlike so many who try to organize for a voice at work. The new union members negotiated a strong contract with Cingular in a matter of weeks.

Seabrooks knows that workers like Holly Butler played a key role in helping Cingular workers win a union. “The people who put themselves out to help others, they deserve a ‘hats off,’” she says. “Someone else went to battle for us and made us successful.”

## Define Your Terms

**Bargaining to organize:** A strategy that involves current union members fighting for provisions in their contract that will reduce employer opposition when workers in other sections of their company or industry seek to join the union.

**Card-check:** A card-check allows workers to win a voice at work when a majority of workers sign cards authorizing union representation, rather than enduring a lengthy election process during which many employers wage hostile anti-union campaigns.

**Neutrality:** An agreement by the employer to remain impartial during an organizing campaign and refrain from a negative campaign against the workers. @



# More unions are linking the bargaining process to organizing—and boosting the strength and security of all members

By LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

# ng to Organize

**T**he bond between Butler and Seabrooks—and thousands more CWA members—illustrates the potential of a strategy union leaders increasingly are implementing in place of the traditional election process: “bargaining to organize.”

Here’s how it works: When one group of workers negotiates a contract, they ask the company to stay neutral during future organizing campaigns and allow workers to join by a card-check.

“This strategy enables CWA to use its collective bargaining power, as well as community and political action, to win the organizing rights and worker protections that federal labor laws fail to guarantee,” says CWA President Morton Bahr.

“It also shows that changing technology can be a tool for securing and improving workers’ futures and not a means to displace them. If unions can take advantage of their effectiveness in bargaining, it will open new job opportunities for members in addition to bringing union representation to a new group of workers.”

The strategy recognizes that workers’ effectiveness at the bargaining table—their ability to win better wages, benefits and dignity on the job—increases with the proportion of workers represented in a specific industry or geographical area. These agreements can protect workers caught in the middle of corporate mergers or industry restructuring. Bargaining to organize also helps the entire union movement grow,

building strength to make workers’ voices heard in their workplaces, communities and in the global economy.

“The union success rate under card-check is much higher—almost twice as high—as National Labor Relations Board elections,” says Adrienne Eaton, associate professor of labor studies at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J. Her research, with West Virginia University scholar Jill Kriesky, shows that 78 percent of organizing campaigns under card-check/neutrality agreements end in success, compared with about 50 percent of NLRB elections. “For union activists, it is well worth exploring the leverage they have to get that language into contracts.”

Many observers agree that the rules governing NLRB-supervised elections are outdated and tilted toward employers—and it’s a good bet the NLRB process will become even more difficult after President George W. Bush appoints four members to the five-member board by the end of 2001.

“If Bush appoints ideologues, what you’ll see is a board that will allow ever greater threats” to be voiced by employers during organizing campaigns, says Prof. Charles Craver, a labor law professor at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. “That would chill people who are sitting on the fence from voting for the union.”

Through bargaining to organize, CWA today represents thousands of workers in the ever-expanding wireless phone industry. Some 1,200 workers at Cingular in Illi-

nois signed up with CWA in October, the single largest wireless group to join the union. In February, 700 more Cingular workers in Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin also joined through card-check. This year, the new CWA members at Cingular wireless in Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts and New York negotiated a contract that includes better pay, flexible work schedules and seniority rights. Last summer, workers at Verizon went on strike to win a card-check and neutrality provision in their contract. Now, CWA is working to hold Verizon to the agreement so workers can organize on a more level playing field.



On the line: CWA President Morton Bahr talks with workers during the two-week Verizon strike they held in large part to secure card-check and neutrality in their contract.





JIM LEVITT

**Bargaining smart:** IAM District 160 member Scott Moses fought for a card-check agreement in his new contract at aerospace and defense contractor BAE Systems.

### Seattle machinists re-tool an unwieldy election process

New Machinists District 160 member Scott Moses saw what can happen when the rules governing organizing are tilted toward employers. The realization galvanized him to fight for a card-check agreement in his new contract at aerospace and defense contractor BAE Systems near Seattle, where he works as a material coordinator for a warehouse that stores torpedo parts. Between April and August 2000, Moses helped mobilize 70 percent of his fellow employees in the logistics division to sign cards saying they wanted to be represented by the union. But by the time they voted, support had been driven down to 52 percent—still enough to win, but a sharp drop.

“The company beat the people down” by spreading rumors that voting union could

lead to layoffs, he says. “A lot of people were scared,” says Moses. But a majority voted for the union because they were fed up with the company chipping away at benefits and vacation time and wanted a voice to improve their jobs. Once on the negotiation team, Moses and others insisted on a clause that would allow workers in other potential bargaining units in the company to join the union if 60 percent sign cards saying they want to. “That gets rid of all that negativity” of an employer anti-union campaign, he says. “It was very important. I didn’t realize how important it was.”

### A safe bet for Las Vegas hotel workers

From the trilling of cell phones and the wheezing of warehouse forklifts, an ongo-

ing bargaining to organize strategy also has helped Las Vegas hotel workers ring in solid victories. Rebounding from some bruising losses in the mid-1980s, Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 226 for more than a decade has included card-check and neutrality agreements in new contracts. Those provisions are as core as wage increases, strong benefits and grievance procedures, says D. Taylor, the union’s staff director. “It has to be one of your top priorities in negotiations,” he says. Since March 1999, bargaining to organize provisions have helped 8,000 workers win a voice on the job at four major hotels, including the Rio Suite Hotel and Casino. “The campaign at Rio took two years,” says Taylor. Without the card-check and neutrality rules, “it would have taken 10 years.”

“The successes of Local 226, Local 6 in New York and other HERE locals around the country illustrate the importance of the bargaining to organize strategy,” says HERE General President John Wilhelm. “We took the lead from our members on this. They recognized before we did how organizing is central to strengthening their union.”

**Victory:** HERE Local 226 members who work at the Rio Suite Hotel and Casino celebrate a first contract in March 2001.



MARK ZARTARIAN

## NLRB Elections: The Numbers Don't Add Up for Workers

*Percentage of National Labor Relations Board elections in which the employer:*

Forces workers to attend captive audience, anti-union meetings: **92**

Directs supervisors to conduct one-on-one pressure sessions with employees: **79**

Hires anti-union consultants: **76**

Fires union supporters: **29**

Source: “Uneasy Terrain: The Impact of Capital Mobility on Workers, Wages and Union Organizing,” by Kate Bronfenbrenner, examines union elections in 1998 and 1999. Cornell University, September 2000.



Union members understand the importance of creating an organizing culture among members, says Taylor, echoing the sentiments of many other union leaders. Local 226 activists trained stewards to talk with union members about the bargaining to organize strategy, discussed it in meetings and explored it in publications. "We spent a long time talking to people about what happens to their ability to bargain" when union workers make up a smaller and smaller segment of the industry, says Taylor. "They understand that employers look to move you down to where nonunion workers are."

### Janitors clean up victories in Denver's suburbs

Like hotel workers in Las Vegas, janitors working in commercial buildings in Denver recognized that contractors would take advantage of trends weakening unions and eroding their hard-fought gains. Laying the groundwork for a stepped-up organizing campaign, leaders of SEIU Local 105 used graphs and charts to show members that while the union was strong downtown, the construction boom had moved



RICK FRIEDMAN

**Negotiating:** HERE President John Wilhelm at the bargaining table with Janice Laux, president and business manager of Local 26 in Boston.

to the suburbs—where building owners tended to use nonunion cleaning contractors.

"I saw our members go from seeing the need for organizing these workers as 'altruistic' to seeing it as being in their self-interest," says Local 105 President Mitch Ackerman.

The janitors' efforts didn't get off to a promising start: The president of one cleaning company actually blew his nose into the union's card-check proposal, according to former Local 105 President Rick Hall. In negotiations in 1996, the union did not win its card-check demand in an otherwise strong master contract (a master contract covers several employers at several sites in a geographic area). One member of the bargaining committee cried openly with bitter disappointment at the ratification vote. However, one-third of the contractors agreed to card-check for the seven-county metro area, and the union worked for two years to include the other companies in the master agreement.

Local 105 then took its bargaining to organize campaign to the public. The union appealed to tenants and real estate owners to respect the rights of workers seeking a voice on the job. The giant California public employees retirement fund, CalPERS—a major investor in commercial real estate in Denver—invoked its responsible contractor policy and switched cleaning contractors when its original contractor committed a slew of unfair labor practices. Other building owners, including philanthropist George Soros, telecom giant US West and the City and County of Denver, soon followed suit. After the campaign, the company president who once blew his nose into the workers' proposal signed the

card-check agreement—and persuaded other contractors to agree as well.

As a result, Local 105 janitorial membership has doubled to 2,200 since the agreement in 1998. Now, union workers clean 92 percent of Denver metropolitan area offices. This strength has enabled union workers to bargain for a pay raise twice as large as they had received previously, as well as the right of part-timers to bid on full-time jobs with phased-in, fully paid health insurance and prescription drug coverage.

"This will change people's lives," says Ackerman. "People who had three chopped-up jobs will be able to have one good job and time to spend with their families." Investing in a bargaining to organize strategy, he says, "pays off in a dramatic way."

*For more information, call or write for a free copy of the AFL-CIO Bargaining to Organize Reference Manual. Filled with sample contract language, case studies, tips on membership education and more, the manual is available from the AFL-CIO Organizing Department, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; 202-637-5347. ☐*

**If congressional elections operated by NLRB rules...**

**We could all kiss democracy goodbye.**

Find out more in an online comic book at [www.aflcio.org/voiceatwork/elect2000.swf](http://www.aflcio.org/voiceatwork/elect2000.swf). ☐





# Ready to Retire?

*Three union members talk about their experiences in winning retirement plans—and making sure those plans will be there when needed*

BY JANE BIRNBAUM

Not long ago, many Americans exulted as their 401(k) retirement accounts ballooned because of a rising stock market. Now, with 401(k) balances shrunk dramatically along with stock prices in the past year, some pension experts see a vindication for traditional pension plans—the plans most often negotiated by unions—and for making sure Social Security is not privatized into individual stock market investment accounts.

Plans like 401(k)s took off in the 1980s. They typically involve workers and employers regularly contributing specific amounts of money, while employers are not required to participate and often give company stock rather than cash. The 401(k) plans differ from traditional defined-benefit pension plans, which are insured by the U.S. government and guarantee workers specific monthly benefits for as long as they live after retirement. By contrast, 401(k)s offer

no guaranteed benefits for life, are not insured and workers must either manage the investments themselves or hire financial advisers.

Recent economic events are “absolute proof” that making retirement plans or Social Security dependent upon the stock market is foolhardy, says Judy Mazo, senior vice president and director of research for the Segal Co., an employee benefits consulting firm serving many unions and also

## Leroy Peyton:

### **Retired on a traditional pension plan and loving life**

Leroy Peyton, an Orlando, Fla.-based freight driver and Teamsters Local 385 member who retired in January, was at AFSCME's Tallahassee rally in April protesting Gov. Jeb Bush's (R) efforts to privatize state government, eliminate job protections and ban state employees from taking part in any political activity. This month, Peyton will be attending the Teamsters international convention in Las Vegas.

And Peyton, 57, will be paying his own way to Las Vegas—a trip he can afford because of the \$2,900 monthly pension he now draws through a traditional Teamsters defined-benefit pension plan. “You aren't going to work and get rich,” Peyton says. “But you can live a comfortable life. And I can continue to live it today with my pension.”

Peyton had the option of working until July 2001 and receiving an additional \$100 per month, but decided “to get out of the rat race,” he explains. “I chose to get out while I'm not sickly or handicapped.” Peyton looks forward to traveling, taking cruises and watching sports.

One thing Peyton doesn't favor is investing pension and Social Security dollars in the stock market. He has friends whose 401(k)s were invested heavily in their employer's telecommunications stock, which has tanked. “Now they say they can't afford to retire, and they've worked over 35 years,” Peyton observes. Similarly, workers putting their Social Security money into the market would be a “bad, bad idea,” he says.



“That's a dead horse. When you put your nest egg in the market and it goes, it's gone.” @

*“When you put your nest egg in the market and it goes, it's gone.”*



the actuary for the AFL-CIO. "These [stock market] gyrations demonstrate that workers need a guaranteed stream of income

they can live on in retirement," she says. Despite the risks involved for workers, George W. Bush is the first president to

support putting retirement security at risk by creating individual accounts as part of Social Security. ►

## Pension Toolbox

Unions provide a range of pension and retirement information for their members. The following are helpful examples for union activists looking to create tools members can use.

**Calculating benefits:** The Machinists created a pension "calculator" that enables members in the national pension fund, a multiemployer Taft-Hartley pension plan, to determine their benefits based on years of service. The IAM website ([www.iamnpf.org](http://www.iamnpf.org)) soon will include an updated calculator that will allow "modeling," which will show how benefits will grow if employers' contributions are increased. IAM National Pension Fund Director Alan Skolnick says the calculator allows members who are not fund participants—and who are in single-company retirement programs looking to negotiate a Taft-Hartley plan—to enter their personal retirement information and compare benefits.

**One-stop pension info:** The Central Pension Fund of Operating Engineers and Participating Employers developed a website as "an efficient and low-cost way to put all of the plan documents into the hands of our participants," says pension fund Chief Executive Officer Michael Fanning. The site, [www.cpfuo.org](http://www.cpfuo.org), which offers links to IUOE local union websites, also includes relevant articles and opinion pieces on retirement issues of interest to IUOE plan participants and union members in general.

**Not for members only:** Click on "members only" (no password required) to check out the Communications Workers of America's Web information on pensions ([www.cwa-union.org](http://www.cwa-union.org) and click on "members only"). Although much of the data is specific to CWA members, the site's pension section draws useful comparisons between single-employer and multiemployer defined-benefit pensions and 401(k) defined-contribution retirement programs. ☐

# Lisa Tantalo:

## Lost one-third of her 401(k) retirement funds in one year

Lisa Tantalo, a property damage coordinator and member of Communications Workers of America Local 1170 in Rochester, N.Y., has watched the value of her 401(k) drop by a third in the past year. The plummeting stock price of her employer, telecommunications giant Global Crossing, which contributes only company stock to her 401(k), is the primary culprit.

Fortunately, 36-year-old Tantalo, who has been on the job since she was 18 and is single with no children, has other retirement options. Eventually, she'll have a monthly retirement income from the traditional defined-benefit pension plan her previous employer established before being bought by Global Crossing. She also will have benefits from a new Taft-Hartley pension plan (a multiemployer benefit plan jointly administered by unions and management) her local battled for in the late 1990s.

"If not for those plans, I wouldn't know what I'll have when I get out of here," she says.

While some of her co-workers like the idea of 401(k)s, Tantalo, who always has wanted to retire at 55, prefers pensions. "As I accumulated service, I knew what my future pension benefit would be because it didn't depend on Wall Street," she says.

"A 401(k) is like gambling and a pension is like a security blanket—



you know what you're going to get, and if you feel you're going to need more when you retire, you subsidize it on your own."

Another aspect of 401(k)s that Tantalo dislikes is having to manage the stock and mutual funds. "I'm a phone person. I've worked in this industry 18 years," she says, "and now you want me to go home and manage my retirement money? I'm tired at the end of the day. If I wanted to be a professional financial adviser, I'd be one. And even if I hired someone to advise me, I'd never really know how good he or she is." ☐

*"A 401(k) is like gambling and a pension is like a security blanket."*



"In Bush's budget speech to Congress in February, his marching orders to the Social Security commission translate to taking money away from Social Security to finance privatized individual investment accounts," says employee benefits attorney Michael S. Gordon, who helped draft the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, the federal law regulating private pensions and health plans.

Overall, union members are far more likely than nonunion workers to be covered by pension plans: In 1997, 90 percent of union members had retirement plans, compared with 76 percent of nonunion workers, according to a U.S. Department of Labor survey of medium- and large-sized employers. And 79 percent of union workers had traditional defined-benefit pension plans, compared with only 42 percent of the nonunion workforce.

Yet increasingly, employers are seeking to shift pensions out of traditional defined-benefit plans at the expense of workers. According to the nonprofit Employee Benefit Research Institute's tabulation of Federal Reserve System statistics, among the approximately 41 percent of American families with some kind of employer-based retirement coverage in 1998, the number with a traditional defined-benefit pension plan was less than 23 percent, down from 40 percent in 1992.

While defined-contribution retirement accounts are less secure, "they're certainly better than no retirement plan," Mazo says.

What's more, Segal research shows that many workers younger than 40, who envision spending their careers with a number of companies, favor 401(k)s. They like the flexibility and portability, according to Mazo. While 401(k)s, like traditional

pension plans, often have a so-called vesting period—often five or more years—before benefits are locked in, workers often can start contributing their own money to 401(k)s soon after they are hired.

According to pension expert Gordon, defined-benefit pensions were designed for long-term employees.

"Now we're in an economy where long-term employees are not most employers' priority," he says. "But it's hard to know how much a permanent phenomenon this will be. It could be that the 'new economy' disappears into history, and we again depend on the 'old economy.'"

In the following personal stories, union members describe their struggles to win retirement benefits and share their experiences with the security of traditional, defined-benefit plans and the uncertainty of stock market-based 401(k)s. ■

# Hugo Gaona:

## Striking for a retirement plan



VIRGINIA LEE HUNTER

In 1978, the day before Los Angeles-based production workers for Hollander Home Fashions were set to vote on UNITE representation, the federal Immigration and Naturalization Service arrested 40 workers. Through the union's efforts, the workers were released and returned to work the next day, when they joined their co-workers in voting for a voice at work.

Over time, the workers became U.S. citizens and the Local 482 members successfully bargained for vacation, sick pay and health coverage. But the 1,200 production workers scattered among Hollander plants nationwide still had no retirement plan—even though the company's office workers, managers, supervisors, mechanics and quality control personnel are covered under 401(k)s.

Earlier this year, after two contracts expired—those covering 450 Local 482 members and 120 Local 133 workers in Frackville, Pa.—and the employer declined to put a retirement plan on the bargaining table, workers at both plants headed for the picket lines. A few days later, Local 2420 members at a Hollander plant in Tignall, Ga., also walked out, to honor the picket lines.

On May 18, UNITE and Hollander, one of the nation's largest makers of home furnishing goods, reached contract agreements that include a union-sponsored 401(k) for the Los Angeles-area and Frackville workers. "Even though we were out many months, it was worth it," says Local 482 member Hugo Gaona, who fits feathers into pillows and comforters. At 25, Gaona is far from retirement, but says a lot of his co-workers who are older are "frightened about retirement."

"I want a retirement plan so that someday I, too, can retire," he says.

Gaona, who lives with his parents in Los Angeles, thinks he and his co-workers helped each other by going on strike. "They tell me that when I get to be their age, I will have a nice benefit," he says. "They tell me that with a retirement plan, I will not have the situation that they face now." ■

*"I want a retirement plan so that someday I, too, can retire."*



# Healthy Choices for Seniors



ANDREW LICHTENSTEIN

## Unions are taking creative steps to ensure health care is there for retirees

BY JANE BIRNBAUM

**Mark Molitor**, a Laborers Local 317 member specializing in building and trades construction in Eau Claire, Wis., watches his mother struggle to pay medical costs not covered by Medicare. After the death of her husband Leonard, a Rubber Worker, Emma Molitor receives a small portion of benefits from her husband's USWA pension and a remnant of his company health insurance. But without her own employer-provided retiree health plan, the former high school cook depends on her son to make it financially.

His mother's experience has made Molitor, 34, a divorced dad of two, even more grateful that \$1.34 of his \$2.90-per-hour health and welfare contribution goes to a multiemployer union fund earmarked for retiree health coverage.

"It's a big frustration watching my mother go through what she does," he says. "And since I plan to retire at 55—when most of us in the building trades can't stand up straight anymore but are too young for Medicare—it's crucial that I have health coverage so I don't dip into my pension."

In March, trustees for Medicare announced its Hospital Insurance Trust Fund will remain solvent until 2029, five years longer than they predicted in a 2000 analysis. Medicare's improved financial condition and the projected general budget surplus provide an unprecedented opportunity to add a much needed prescription drug benefit for seniors who face rapidly growing bills for costly life saving medicines. But President George W. Bush dropped the bill. His budget commits almost nothing to creating a new Medicare drug benefit desperately needed by millions of Medicare recipients like Emma Molitor, not to mention legions of early retirees with no health coverage of any kind.

Today, fewer employers than ever are offering retiree health benefits. Among midsize firms (with 200 to 999 workers), the percentage offering retiree health benefits was only 35 percent in 2000, down 6 percentage points from 1999 and 31 percentage points below the 1988 mark, according to the nonprofit Kaiser Family Foundation.

To protect retiree health care, union activists increasingly are "thinking outside the box," say experts, including Tom Del Fiacco, a vice president of the Segal Co. benefits consulting firm and the AFL-CIO's actuary.

In recent years, the Steelworkers have asked doctors who treat a large number of union members to join health maintenance organizations (HMOs) that care for Medicare recipients, so union retirees won't have to pay the higher fees involved when a physician does not belong to an HMO. The United Food and Commercial Workers has redirected over-funded pension money to retiree health and welfare. And in 1999, the UAW won a ruling in the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals prohibiting employers from terminating union retirees' promised health benefits.

"With retirees' health costs rising more than 13 percent annually, uncertainty about the outcome of Medicare reform and baby boomers' impending retirement, unions need to act creatively to secure the care of current and future retirees," says Del Fiacco. Del Fiacco helped Wisconsin Laborers District Council President Michael Ryan and Laborers District Council of Minnesota and North Dakota Council President Jim Brady realize a goal of financed retiree coverage for their members.

The plan Del Fiacco helped create, for example, provides full coverage for retired Laborers who do not yet qualify for Medicare but who have 42,000 hours of service. When they reach age 65, the plan becomes their Medicare



supplement (including a drug benefit Congress so far has failed to create, despite urging by unions, Democrats and senior activists). The plan is easily explained to members—except for the 42,000-hour requirement, which sounds daunting, but actually isn't, says Wisconsin Laborers District Council organizer Steve Mortaloni. (Mortaloni says when workers find out that 42,000 hours means working full-time, with two weeks of vacation a year, for 21 years, or 1,400 hours a year for 30 years, they're fine with it.)

At the same time, the Medicare supplement plan also can be an organizing tool. "When I go into a campaign, I look for an older person, find out his background and tell him about the retiree health coverage," Mortaloni explains. "Then that guy will tell the younger workers, 'I'm 55. When I retire I won't have squat and I'll be fighting for insurance—you'd be smart to join the union and get this plan.'"

### A health alliance for union retirees

For union members who already are retired with little or no health coverage except Medicare, the most affordable—yet often most difficult option—is joining an HMO. But all too frequently, HMOs drop enrollees with little warning, and many consumers worry about their quality and continuity of care, according to New York-based union health activist Ruth Antoniades. The solution, she says, is to use the clout of a large pool of consumers. Antoniades organizes for the Labor Health Alliance, created in the late 1990s by a group of 40 different New York City-area union health and welfare funds. Now, with 325,000 union retiree members, its representatives negotiate HMO benefits and rates.

The alliance was created in response to an outcry from modestly pensioned union retirees—including textile workers, home health aides and clerks—who worried that their medical costs, even with Medicare, were beginning to outstrip their resources, Antoniades recalls. "Some were even overinsured with costly, private 'Medigap' policies that offer a limited drug benefit."

Now, alliance representatives smooth the way for retirees by acting as advocates with their HMOs. "We get involved in matters ranging from access to care to

signing up their doctors for the HMOs' networks," Antoniades explains.

Two satisfied alliance members are Charles and Nancy Ferrante of Eastchester, N.Y. (photo, page 15). Charles Ferrante, 71, a Teamsters Local 584 member, retired from wholesale milk delivery. Nancy Ferrante works part-time in department store sales while receiving Medicare. When first on their own with Medicare, they joined an HMO. After it dropped them, the alliance made an effort to find them. "The letter said they were starting up and would help us," Charles Ferrante recalls.

Through the alliance, they signed up with another for-profit HMO—and its network included the internist overseeing Charles Ferrante's diabetes. Still, the couple's out-of-pocket health costs total nearly \$200 a month—and Ferrante says that's "too high." It is, Antoniades agrees, explaining that the HMO says its fees are based on the reimbursement it receives from Medicare in the Ferrantes' county—which the HMO says is too low.

Radical cuts in Medicare reimbursements contained in the federal Balanced Budget Act of 1997 sparked the wholesale shedding of Medicare recipients by HMOs, according to many health care experts, including Antoniades. "That's why unions believe Medicare 'reform' relying on vouchers and the private sector, as President Bush wants, is a bad idea," she explains. "We need a two-pronged attack—we need to use the benefits we have as creatively as possible in the constantly changing HMO-Medicare environment, and to enhance Medicare and retiree benefits and prevent their erosion."

### Alliance for Retired Americans: Prescription drug coverage a top priority

In the meantime, the need for a Medicare benefit that covers prescription drugs—and for controlling spiraling prescription drug costs—takes on more urgency as fewer seniors can afford the prescription drugs they need.

Prescription benefits and the high cost of prescription drugs—which rose 306 percent between 1981 and 1999, according to the House Democrats' Prescription Drug Task Force—are critical issues for seniors, says George J. Kourpias, former president of the Machinists and now head of the Alliance for Retired Americans.

Roughly one-third of Medicare recipients—13 million and rising—lack prescription drug



**Union covered:** Mark Molitor's Laborers' health fund will ensure he has a healthy retirement, but he worries about his retired mother, who can't afford full health coverage.

coverage, according to the Alliance. In late May, the launch of the Alliance, made up of 2.5 million union retirees and members of community groups, included nationwide demonstrations urging passage of laws giving seniors access to affordable prescription drugs.

SEIU District 1199/P member Maxine Yancy, 76, a retired practical nurse, is president of a 33-member Alliance chapter in the Pittsburgh area. "I have three women members whose neighbors help feed them and whose children must support them because they cannot afford their medications," she says. "They have Social Security and small pensions but can't afford to buy prescription drugs. It's not fair that these women should be so vulnerable after a lifetime of working."

The demand for prescription drug benefits gained momentum in 1995, when 13 retired activists, several of them elderly, low-income African American women confined to wheelchairs, were arrested and taken from the U.S. Capitol in plastic handcuffs while protesting closed hearings on Medicare and Social Security changes. Some of those arrested eventually appeared on "The Phil Donahue Show," and the media coverage of the arrests "totally turned the debate around," Kourpias recalls.

One of those arrested, Bert Seidman, today an Alliance volunteer, thinks what happened in 1995 is "an indication of the many seniors nationwide who are willing to make any necessary sacrifices to make sure Medicare and Social Security are not privatized, and to win Medicare drug coverage today."

"We don't know what will happen, but we are prepared to be arrested again if that is necessary." ☐



# Opening DOORS FOR GLOBAL FAIRNESS

BY JAMES B. PARKS

Inside the police-protected corridors of the Quebec City Convention Centre, President George W. Bush and other Western Hemisphere leaders met in April behind closed doors to discuss creating the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the world's largest free-trade zone.

Outside the center, cordoned off by phalanxes of Canadian police and a two-and-a-half-mile-long fence, thousands of union members, students, environmental and human rights activists marched and rallied to send a message that the doors of secrecy must be opened: Trade must be fair and reflect the concerns of people—and not just those of the multinational corporations.



JOHN KUNTZ/CLEVELAND RAIN DEALER



JIM WEST

Echoes of the Quebec City protest of the FTAA, which would extend from the Arctic Circle to Central and South America, took place all along the U.S.-Canada border. Steelworkers—8,000 strong from Cleveland and Canada—marched in Quebec City as 4,000 student, union and environmental activists demonstrated at the main border crossing between Blaine, Wash., and Vancouver, Canada. The Coalition of Economic Justice, Jobs with Justice and the Buffalo (N.Y.) Activist Network held a “Globalize Liberation” rally near the

Peace Bridge that connects the United States and Canada. In Detroit, 400 workers marched to the U.S.-Canadian border.

The Northeast Labor Committee for Global Justice, a coalition of unions, central labor councils and Jobs with Justice, sent 15 busloads of union and community activists to Quebec City, and others traveled there by the carload, including Jeff Crosby. Crosby, president of the North Shore Labor Council in Lynn, Mass., was detained at the border—and only with the help of Canadian and U.S. unions was allowed to cross two days later.





**Cross-border action:** Coordinating their efforts with demonstrators in Quebec City, union members in Detroit marched to the Canadian border to protest the FTAA.

"The fact that I finally was able to get in is a small indication of the power that small people can have against a government," Crosby says. "We are the majority—from the indigenous people of Peru to the environmentalists in Brazil, trade unionists in the United States and Canada and students on college campuses—and we can stop FTAA if we come together."

### Back to NAFTA

Modeled after the North American Free Trade Agreement, the FTAA would eliminate tariffs in every country in the Western Hemisphere except Cuba—and its passage by 2005 is a top priority for Bush and Big Business.

"NAFTA and FTAA are part of a long-term trend toward unfair trade practices. We have to lobby and organize and go out and demonstrate so people know that free trade is not free," says Katharine Cristiani, a student activist at Oberlin College in Ohio. "It's

been a free ride for business, but it has cost working families a lot."

Over the past seven years, NAFTA has caused the loss of good jobs, devalued wages and helped destroy communities in the United States, Canada and Mexico. Extending NAFTA through the FTAA without including guarantees of workers' and human rights would widen the already huge gap between the rich and poor in this hemisphere, activists say.

"We're not against free trade. We just want fair trade," says Sherman Crowder, contract coordinator for U.S. Workers' Union Local 1098 in Cleveland. "NAFTA's supporters claimed it would create new jobs and new markets for our exports. The only thing we're exporting is good jobs."

Recent studies show the devastating impact of NAFTA on workers on both sides of the U.S.-Mexican border. The Economic Policy Institute reported that since NAFTA took effect in 1994, the United States has

lost 766,030 actual and potential jobs. California alone lost more than 82,000 jobs, while 11 states each lost at least 20,000.

Other studies have demonstrated that NAFTA has pushed wages down in the United States, Mexico and Canada, eroded public health and environmental laws and helped create political and economic instability.

(For more information on these studies, click on [www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy](http://www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy).)

"NAFTA hurts Mexican workers," says José Luis Hernandez, vice president of UNT, a large Mexican labor federation. About 14 million Mexican farm workers are working less or not at all because of NAFTA, Hernandez says, because large U.S. agribusinesses have driven them out of the market. "As a result, the corporate fat cats are getting richer, while workers suffer," he says.

Rather than carving up the hemisphere for their corporate allies, Hernandez says, governments should promote policies that help developing countries grow and create jobs that pay enough so workers can afford to buy the goods they make.

### Fast Track revisited

To push passage of FTAA, Bush early last month asked Congress to grant so-called "trade promotion authority," a less offensive-sounding name for the same "Fast Track" authority Congress rejected in 1997 and 1998 as a result of efforts by union members and their allies. Under the renamed Fast Track, Congress would have to limit the time it considers the FTAA and could not make any changes to the treaty.

Bush also sent Congress a set of "trade principles," which outlined the key guarantees the administration is seeking in the Fast Track authorization; workers' rights and environmental protections were excluded.

The AFL-CIO and affiliated unions have launched a campaign to defeat Fast Track again on Capitol Hill and ensure trade

## Public Supports Workers' Rights in Trade Pacts

A majority of Americans think trade agreements should benefit working people and the environment, not just multinational corporations and the rich, according to a 1999 poll by the University of Maryland's Program on International Policy Attitudes. Some 56 percent of Americans surveyed say the growth of international trade has increased the gap between rich and poor in this country.

Almost 75 percent of the respondents say the U.S. government does not sufficiently take the concerns of working Americans into account when negotiating trade deals, and more than half think treaties reflect the views of multinational corporations far too much in comparison with workers' rights and the environment.

An overwhelming majority of those surveyed—78 percent—say leaders should include workers' rights and environmental concerns in trade agreements. Even more—88 percent—think trade should be balanced with such goals as protecting workers, the environment and human rights, even if it means slowing the growth of trade and the economy. ☐



**Seeking fair trade:** Kjel Jacobsen of Brazil's CUT labor federation (left) and AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer William discuss the global economy at the ORIT congress in Washington, D.C.



agreements include enforceable workers' rights, human rights and environmental protections. The campaign seeks to guard against privatization of public services and deregulation of industries and against policies that hurt the hard-hit U.S. manufacturing sector.

The federation and 400 organizations in the Americas, including unions, women's groups, farmers, environmentalists and human rights groups, also are working through the Hemispheric Social Alliance to propose commonsense alternatives to the FTAA and assure fair trade, social justice and respect for core workers' rights.

### Fighting for a Voice@Work

Since passage of NAFTA, corporations and governments have used the agreement to deny workers their most basic rights, especially the right to organize and bargain collectively to gain a voice at work. "Only by joining and forming unions can workers in all of our countries ensure ourselves and our families of the decent standard of living we deserve," AFL-CIO President John Sweeney told participants at a People's Summit of the Americas in Quebec. Held simultaneously with the FTAA meeting, the People's Summit provided a forum for workers' and environmental issues not discussed by politicians and corporate leaders meeting on the other side of the barbed-wire barrier.

As a result of NAFTA, companies seeking to thwart U.S. workers' efforts to win a voice at work successfully have used the threat of moving to Mexico to intimidate them, according to Cornell University Prof. Kate Bronfenbrenner. (Her 2000 report, "Uneasy Terrain: The Impact of Capital Mobility on Workers, Wages and Union Organizing," is available at [www.ustdrc.gov/research](http://www.ustdrc.gov/research). Download the file listed as [bronfenbrenner.pdf](http://www.ustdrc.gov/research).)

Most workers throughout the hemisphere are systematically denied a voice at work, including in the United States, where labor laws are stacked against workers, Bronfenbrenner finds.

In such countries as Colombia, workers risk their lives when seeking a voice at work. More than 100 trade union members were killed in Colombia last year and another 35 have been murdered this year. While meeting in Washington, D.C., in April, delegates to the Inter-American Regional Organization of Workers (ORIT), the Latin and North American branch of the International Con-

federation of Free Trade Unions, joined union activists in a march to the Colombian Embassy to protest the killings and to demand the government respect workers' freedom to choose a union.

### Posting workers' rights around the world

In 1998, the International Labor Organization reaffirmed unanimously four basic workers' rights, including the right to organize and bargain collectively, in a "Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work." (The right to refuse forced labor, the right to reject child labor and the right to work free from discrimination are the other basic rights.) On May 1, the international union movement launched a campaign to post the Declaration in the form of a poster throughout workplaces, union halls and government offices worldwide, and May Day activities from Kenya to Brazil included actions around the four rights.

In Thailand, 20,000 workers marched at the Royal Plowing Field in Bangkok, many carrying the poster, with others wearing images of it on their T-shirts. Indonesia's trade union federation bought ads in two national newspapers to highlight the ILO principles and shine a spotlight on employers who have violated workers' rights.

Unionists put up thousands of posters in the towns and villages of war-ravaged Kosovo, and publicized their message through radio and television ads. ORIT is making posting the rights a key part of the fight against the FTAA. (To download a copy of the poster and a screen saver, go to [www.aflcio.org/iloposter](http://www.aflcio.org/iloposter).)

"We must make sure that the multinational companies that are supporting the FTAA respect these ILO principles," says Kjeld Jakobsen, international secretary of CUT, Brazil's labor federation. "We must actively investigate and expose how these companies treat workers in whatever country they do business."

The freedom to win a voice at work also is necessary to build the political strength working men and women need to gain fair trade, union leaders say. "If you have 90 percent of



**Elected:** In April, AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson became the first woman and first U.S. citizen elected president of ORIT.

the workers on a job in the union, you have a better chance of getting a good contract and getting your voice heard than if you have 30 percent," says Jeff Engles, who helped coordinate union participation in the Washington State-Vancouver, Canada, FTAA demonstrations. Engles, a tugboat sailor, is a member of the Inland Boatmen's Union of the Pacific, an affiliate of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. "If we want these world leaders to listen to us, we need

more people in every country to join unions."

Along with allies throughout the Americas, the AFL-CIO and ORIT plan to continue to mobilize workers and educate the public about the dangers of expanding NAFTA to the entire hemisphere, says AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Chavez-Thompson, who in April was elected president of ORIT, becoming the first woman and first U.S. citizen to head the 45-million member organization.

"We plan to educate our members, strengthen our ties to other groups, lobby and demonstrate—whatever it takes to bring fairness to the trade negotiating process," she says.

"We have to reclaim the Americas and make a hemisphere where working people are respected and where justice is finally done. If we don't, nobody will." ☐

## Find Out More...

- FTAA educational materials for union members are available through the AFL-CIO Education Department at 202-637-5188.
- To find out more about the AFL-CIO Campaign for Global Fairness, go to [www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy](http://www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy).
- For information on the global economy's impact on women, click on [www.aflcio.org/women](http://www.aflcio.org/women) or call the AFL-CIO Working Women's Department at 202-637-5064.
- For a copy of the "Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work" poster and screen saver, visit [www.aflcio.org/iloposter](http://www.aflcio.org/iloposter).
- To find out what trade unions in the rest of the Americas say about the FTAA, visit [www.clc-ctc.ca/campaigns/orit\\_ltrr.pdf](http://www.clc-ctc.ca/campaigns/orit_ltrr.pdf). ☐



# Turning Charity *into Solidarity*

BY JAMES B. PARKS

When an earthquake hit Washington State last February, the Bon Marché department store in suburban Seattle where Kathy Timmerman works was so damaged she could see the highway through cracks in the walls. It was two weeks before the store was safe for her and her co-workers to return to work—two weeks that she was without a paycheck.

As her bills began to pile up, Timmerman and her co-workers, all members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1001, found a helping hand in the union movement—the AFL-CIO Union Community Fund, which gave her and many of her co-workers assistance. “When you live from paycheck to paycheck and suddenly you’re out of work, there is nothing more frightening than not knowing where the rent is coming from or if you can do a simple thing like buy groceries,” says Timmerman, 49, who is single. “I’m so thankful for the union and the Union Community Fund.”

After the national Union Community Fund sent out a request to international and local unions for help, the Seattle Union Community Fund, working through a nonprofit agency created by the King County Labor Council, received and paid more than \$13,000 in bills for workers and community agencies hit hard by the earthquake, says Nancy Holland-Young, Union Community Fund chair in Seattle. “We saw a need in the community after this seismic rocker,” Holland-Young says, “and the Union Community Fund stepped in and filled it.”



JIM LEVITT



Disaster relief is just one part of the Union Community Fund's mission. Launched in February 2000, the Union Community Fund offers a new opportunity for union members to make sure their charitable dollars benefit working families in their communities. “Its goal is very simple—a better life for working families,” says AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson. To achieve these ends, she says, the Union Community Fund provides resources to programs that relieve or solve specific community needs, work for fairness in the use and distribution of community resources and give working people the tools to find long-term solutions to community problems.

Seattle is one of six locations—Arizona, Houston, New Orleans, San Jose, Calif., and Washington, D.C., are the others—where the Union Community Fund has embarked on its first major fund-raising drives.

State federations and local central labor councils play a key role in developing the Union Community Fund's goals, setting up advisory boards with representatives from





Welcome support: The Union Community Fund helped out when UFCW member Kathy Timmerman lost two weeks' pay after the earthquake hit Seattle this year.

unions and the community. The boards develop and implement plans for workplace fund-raising, conduct studies of needs in the community and determine which organizations to support.

In Seattle and King County, where damage from the earthquake is almost cleaned up, the local Union Community Fund has a goal of raising \$281,000 for groups that reach out to the area's large immigrant and low-income population. Some of the organizations the Union Community Fund plans to support include the Unemployment Law Project; the Low Income Housing Institute; Seattle Tenants Union; Image, a group for Latino public-sector employees; and APACE, the Asian Pacific American Coalition for Equality.

Because the fund does not compete with the United Way, it provides an opportunity to expand the pool of money available to economic and social justice groups, says Union Community Fund Executive Director Jim Sessions. In fact, the first six fund-raising campaigns were slated to avoid competing with United Way drives, he says.

Last fall, the Union Community Fund and the United Way conducted a limited and abbreviated joint campaign in Washington, D.C., among AFL-CIO headquarters staff, raising \$58,554—a 36 percent increase over the amount raised the previous year by the United Way alone. The campaign demonstrated that when workers have more choices, the amount of money they donate to charities increases, Sessions says.

Building on the success of the campaign in Washington, D.C., the Union Community Fund board is expanding its spring drive to include staff members at 34 union headquarters, and expects to raise \$100,000. The local Union Community Fund board will channel the donations to fund four groups: the Metropolitan Washington Council Community Services Agency, the local AFL-CIO agency that provides assistance to strikers, counseling and other services; the Progressive Maryland Education Fund and the Tenant and Worker Support Committee, which led fights for a living wage in Montgomery County, Md., and Alexandria, Va., respectively; and the District of Columbia Employment Justice Center, which provides free legal help to workers.

In New Orleans, the Union Community Fund specifically is targeting 16,000 employees at six unionized plants, while in Arizona, eight Communications Workers of America local unions representing 14,000 members launched a statewide Union Community Fund. CWA plans to negotiate payroll deductions for the Union Community Fund as part of new collective bargaining contracts, says Mike McGrath, Arizona Union Community Fund chairman.

Union members' desire to make meaningful changes in their communities is a key part of the Union Community Fund's success, says Joslyn N. Williams, president of the Metropolitan Washington (D.C.) AFL-CIO. "Union members work hard for their money, and when we give our money to a

cause, we want it to be used for something that leaves a lasting impact on our lives and our communities.

"The kinds of activities we're talking about funding are those that promote the goals of the union movement for justice for working families and helping the least among us," he says.

### **A community looks to the Union Community Fund**

While the Union Community Fund program is well under way in Seattle and Washington, D.C., in Houston, where union and community members are launching the program, the initial support for the fund already has been tremendous.

"I have not seen such enthusiasm from the community about anything we have done as I have with the Union Community Fund," says Richard Shaw, secretary-treasurer of the Harris County Central Labor Council in Houston. "The Union Community Fund will connect us to a whole lot more people in the community who are excited about us doing something for working families. Often, the community sees unions as only being concerned about our members. Now, with the Union Community Fund, they see that we want to make an impact on folks in the community, whether they are union members or not."

The Harris County Union Community Fund reached out to several community organizations when forming its 20-member board, which now includes representatives of the Black United Fund; the Tejano Center, a neighborhood social service center serving Latinos; and the Campaign for Human Development, an anti-poverty, social justice program of U.S. Catholic bishops.

Later this year, Union Community Fund's second wave will begin by adding up to eight more locations, Sessions says.

"We're excited about the future of the Union Community Fund," Chavez-Thompson says. "The success of the fund is proof that the union movement, at its heart, is about unity, solidarity and family, about joining our combined strength to help each other and give each other and our communities a hand up whenever and wherever that help is needed. That's what the Union Community Fund is all about."

For more information, call 202-835-8240 or click on [www.unioncommunityfund.org](http://www.unioncommunityfund.org). ☐



## UNION 101 FOR KIDS

### Union Word Search

Find the words below in **BLUE CAPITAL** letters in the puzzle as you learn about unions.

Q	W	E	P	I	S	H	L	A	U	K	J	M	L	P
O	W	O	R	K	I	E	K	H	N	G	F	D	S	A
M	B	R	V	X	Z	A	S	F	I	H	K	O	U	Y
T	R	G	A	R	W	L	Q	W	O	R	Y	U	T	E
J	S	A	F	E	A	T	C	O	N	T	R	A	C	T
N	Q	N	C	S	Z	H	X	A	Q	C	H	L	J	P
O	I	I	E	P	E	C	W	Q	V	A	S	Q	L	H
L	K	Z	A	E	Q	A	E	E	A	I	Y	U	E	M
B	C	E	X	C	A	E	S	E	C	H	K	I	I	Q
A	L	I	K	I	M	E	Q	U	A	L	P	A	Y	P
O	K	M	N	H	I	W	A	Z	I	C	V	N	L	G
L	J	C	Q	Q	S	A	Q	E	I	I	Y	U	I	M
N	Q	X	A	I	Q	E	I	I	Q	E	E	V	N	H
O	Q	A	R	C	A	I	N	I	N	C	I	Y	P	W
B	S	V	X	N	A	W	E	E	Y	I	U	P	I	U
U	I	R	L	I	Q	S	C	V	Q	M	Y	Y	I	P
W	E	Y	Z	T	A	B	M	V	X	R	D	G	T	Y
A	R	E	S	Y	E	Q	W	A	G	E	S	U	N	N

- Who goes to **WORK** in your family?
- Have you ever asked your mom or dad whether she or he has a **UNION** at work?
- A union is a group of people at work who **ORGANIZE** to make their **JOB**s better.
- Unions help workers win higher **WAGES**.
- Sometimes women at work don't get paid the same as men, even though they do the same jobs. Unions help women get **EQUAL PAY**.
- Some workplaces are dangerous. Through unions, workers can be sure they are **SAFE**.
- Having a union also helps parents get **HEALTH CARE** for their families so you can stay well.
- Having a union helps your father or mother get time off so you can go on **VACATION** to the beach, lake or amusement park.
- Unions help people get health care, equal pay and vacations by **BARGAINING** with the boss.
- When workers bargain, they get a **CONTRACT**.
- With a union contract, people at work get treated with **RESPECT** and **DIGNITY**.

### Union Quiz

- In some countries, children as young as 8 years old must work to help support their families. In countries where workers have strong unions, children are more likely to go to school and less likely to have to work. True or False?
- One of the most important things unions do is bargain with the company to get better pay for workers. How much more money do union members make than nonunion members, on average?
  - \$50 a week
  - \$100 a week
  - \$156 a week
- The U.S. Civil Rights Act helps make sure people of all races and religions have access to jobs and housing without discrimination. Under the Voting Rights Act, everyone is assured of the right to vote. Social Security and Medicare help retired workers support themselves and afford health care. Which of these important U.S. laws did unions help to pass?
  - The Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts
  - The ban on child labor
  - Social Security and Medicare
  - All of the above
- Women have not always had the right to vote. In the United States, unions helped women get the right to vote in what year?
- What kind of people belong to unions?
  - Factory workers
  - Nurses
  - Airline pilots
  - Construction workers
  - Athletes and movie stars
  - All of the above

### Answers

- True.
- c. \$156 a week
- d. All of the above
- 1920
- f. All of the above

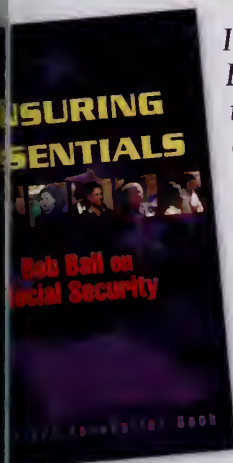




## EXHIBIT

**"Every Worker is an Organizer: Farm Labor and the Resurgence of the United Farm Workers,"** highlights the work of labor photographer David Bacon, who has chronicled the lives and working conditions of California farm laborers and the work of the Farm Workers over the past decade. Bacon's striking photographs highlight Watsonville strawberry workers, the 1998 strike at D'Arrigo Brothers Produce Co. in Salinas and union members' monthlong, 343-mile march from Delano to Sacramento in 1994 retracing UFW founder César Chávez's historic 1966 march. At the Oakland Museum of California through Aug. 26, 2001. Phone: 510-238-2200 or visit the website at [www.museumca.org](http://www.museumca.org). ☐

## PUBLICATION



**Insuring the Essentials: Bob Ball on Social Security,** by Robert M. Ball and edited by Thomas N. Bethell, features a selection of 22 articles and essays on Social Security by Ball, chief administrator of the Social Security Administration from 1952 to 1973. The selections, written between 1942 and 2000, examine the Social Security program and its impact on

American workers and their families. Ball tackles the problems and myths associated with privatization schemes that would divert money to individual investment accounts and offers proposals for improving the nation's universal retirement program. \$14.95. Published by The Century Foundation Press and distributed by the Brookings Institution, 800-552-5450 or in Washington, D.C., 202-797-6258. ☐

## THE GIFT OF ART

Images of workers designed by nationally known artist Joshua Sarantitis now are available as a print or greeting cards through the University of Massachusetts' Labor Resource Center. The poignant multimedia images by Sarantitis, who says his goal is to "evoke the spirit and solidarity of the union movement," include a 15-inch-by-28-inch art print and a set of 12 cards with three different scenes adapted from the print. \$50 for the print and \$20 for the cards and envelopes. Price includes shipping and handling. To order, send a check or money order to the Labor Resource Center, UMass Boston, 100 Morrissey Blvd., Boston, Mass. 02125. Sarantitis can be e-mailed at: [murals@earthlink.net](mailto:murals@earthlink.net). ☐



## MUSIC

**"Don't Want Your Millions,"** by Clark "Bucky" Halker and the Complete Unknowns, offers 16 well-performed selections, including such union favorites as "Which Side Are You On?" "Rebel Girl," "Hard Travelin'," "I Ain't Got No Home" and Leadbelly's "Bourgeois Blues." Author Studs Terkel gives a dramatic reading of "The Lumberjack's Prayer" and "Scab's Lament." Halker, whose music was influenced by Bob Dylan, Woody Guthrie and Utah Phillips, says his working-class rock 'n' roll is meant to "fan the flames of discontent." To order the CD, send \$15 to Revolting Records, P.O. Box 257608, Chicago, Ill. 60625, or visit [www.buckyhalker.com](http://www.buckyhalker.com). ☐



to membership involvement. "Collective Bargaining Strategies in the Global Economy" expands on last year's theme of unions and globalization. The first two courses are non-credit and cost \$275 per course. "Collective Bargaining Strategies" is a two-credit class and costs \$350. For more information, contact Claudia Strednak at 607-255-4462. For an online registration form, visit: [www.ilr.cornell.edu/extension/training/catalog.html](http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/extension/training/catalog.html) and click on Labor Summer School under the "Program" button. ☐

## FESTIVAL

Union artisans will be among the workers featured at the 2001 Smithsonian Folklife Festival, June 27-July 1 and July 4-July 8 on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.



"Masters of the Building Arts," a main exhibit of the festival, features more than 70 skilled building trades workers—stone carvers, stone and marble masons, blacksmiths, slate roofers, sheet metal craftsmen and others—demonstrating the techniques, tools, materials and traditional methods they use in construction today. Bricklayers, Laborers and other building trades unions will be taking part. ☐

## WORKSHOPS

The 2001 Labor Summer School at Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations is offering three new summer session workshops, July 9-11. "Union Cities: How to Build a Local Labor Movement" is specifically for unionists who want to take on leadership roles in their central labor councils. "Uniting a Divided Local Union" addresses some of the most difficult barriers



**What Every Woman Needs to Know About Money and Retirement,** a 15-page retirement planning guide, provides important facts on Social Security, pensions, 401(k)s and IRAs. Along with savings and investment planning information, the booklet stresses that women typically need more money than men in their retirement years—perhaps as much as 100 percent of their preretirement income—because women generally earn lower wages, live longer than men and leave their jobs before qualifying for a pension to care for children or aging parents. \$1 for a single copy (the fee covers shipping and handling) or \$20 for a box of 800, from the Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement. Send a check or money order to WISER, Suite 619, 1201 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004. For more information, visit the website [www.wiser.heinz.org](http://www.wiser.heinz.org) and click on Articles/Publications. ☐



## Visit [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org) and Get the Tools You Need for Today's Working Families.

**Check the record:** Click on the **BushWatch** icon at [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org) to find out how George W. Bush is favoring Big Business at the expense of working family priorities—by rolling back workplace safety rules, cutting vital health care programs for the uninsured, supporting Fast Track authority and raiding Medicare to pay for tax cuts for the rich.

**BushWatch**

**Get the tools:** A brand new **Working Families Toolkit** includes downloadable fliers, fact sheets, talking points, clip art and materials for worksite leafleting and talking with working families about critical issues. Visit [www.aflcio.org/workingfamielstoolkit](http://www.aflcio.org/workingfamielstoolkit) or [www.workingfamielstoolkit.org](http://www.workingfamielstoolkit.org). New campaign materials are posted regularly.

**Spread the word:** Get out the word about online resources for your members and their working families.

- Working Families Health Care Center
- Executive PayWatch
- Your Rights@Work
- Homework Helpers
- Elder Care Information
- Scholarship Guide

RESPECT  
**WORK**  
STRENGTHEN  
**FAMILY**  
AFL-CIO



Learn more about **Rights@Work.** [www.aflcio.org/healthcare](http://www.aflcio.org/healthcare) ▲ [www.aflcio.org/rightsatwork](http://www.aflcio.org/rightsatwork) ◀

...all at [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org)

To add a link to your union's website from any of these Web pages at [aflcio.org](http://aflcio.org), send your request to [webeditor@aflcio.org](mailto:webeditor@aflcio.org).

[www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org)

A place for working families on the Web



Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

JULY 2001

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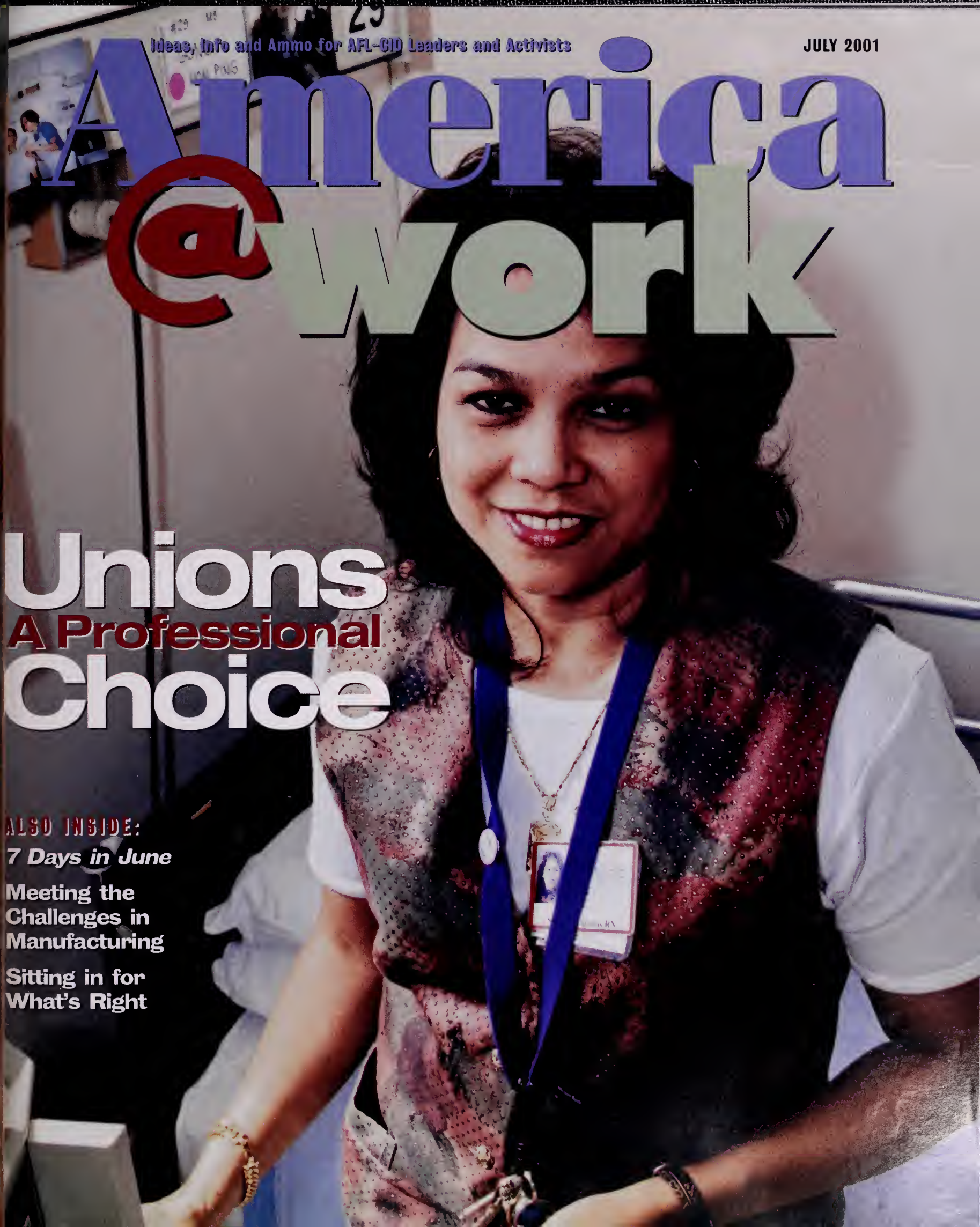
## Unions A Professional Choice

**ALSO INSIDE:**

**7 Days in June**

**Meeting the  
Challenges in  
Manufacturing**

**Sitting in for  
What's Right**





**"I FOUND THE ARTICLE** on the pension plans [June America@work] very useful in a recent campaign. I look forward to your magazine every month. As an international representative for the IUE-CWA, I find the articles to be useful in helping local unions put together their newsletters."—Mike Rusinek, staff representative, IUE-CWA

## SAY WHAT?

### What positive outcomes have come out of your union's 7 Days in June actions?

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's Say What? Selected responses will appear in a future issue. America@work, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; phone: 202-637-5010; fax: 202-508-6908; e-mail: atwork@afcio.org.

## HERE'S WHAT YOU SAY

### ABOUT HOW YOUR UNION PLANS TO REACH OUT TO RETIREES AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO JOIN THE ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED AMERICANS:

"[Regarding] the Alliance for Retired Americans in California, the Machinists union is busy building and organizing IAM clubs in local lodges where clubs do not exist and improving the membership where clubs do exist. Also, IAM retirees are working with other organizations, such as Alameda County Central Labor Council FORUM [Federation of Retired Union Members]...to become a part of the new Alliance for Retired Americans. As we all know, the Alliance is made up of seniors [from] various organizations, such as church groups, senior centers, unions...and other social groups in the community."—Andrew Barnes, retired Machinists Grand Lodge representative, member of the Congress of California Seniors, chair, Region 3, Hercules, Calif.

**"ONE OF THE MOST** haunting realities of American life is that those who perform the most essential work in this country are the lowest paid. Those who make life so comfortable, even luxurious, for the affluent are the target of anti-union employers who trample on a worker's right to organize....That's why the union message is as important in economic and political life as gospels of faith are from the pulpit."—W. Allen Biggs, retired, Teamsters' staff, Silver Spring, Md.

**"MY WIFE AND I** would like to symbolically refuse our 'tax rebate' in protest of Bush's tax break for the rich. We thought we could challenge multimillionaires to match our 'tax rebate' and donate the amounts to some charity or agency that is going to be cut by this irresponsible media event."—Doug Baier, IAFE, Bremerton, Wash.

**"I'M AN ELECTRICAL ENGINEER..."**[and] work with many fine Electrical Workers electricians...[but] I've never had a chance to be part of a union....I was very annoyed...to hear President-select Bush babbling with an anti-union theme: '...a union member [should] be able to opt out of a union spending money if he or she doesn't like the purpose for which it is being spent.' Now, by the same line of reasoning, if I don't like the way Congress is spending my money, would it be OK for me to opt out of paying income tax?"—Charles Stein, Boca Raton (Palm Beach County), Fla.

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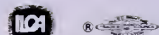
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RAY CROVELL/PAGE ONE

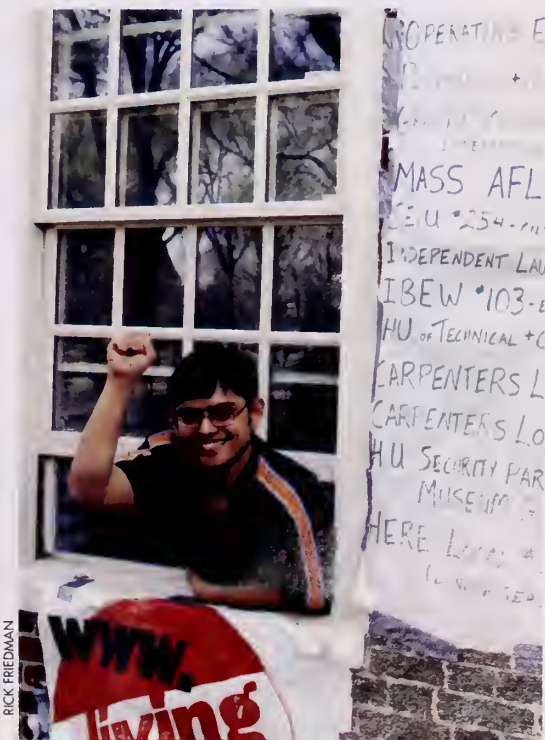
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RICK FRIEDMAN



## UNIONS VOTE TO CREATE A NEW ALLIANCE

**W**ith a unanimous vote, union leaders in New York launched a New Alliance to reinvigorate the state's union movement, aimed at channeling resources to organizing, political and legislative campaigns to win working families a voice on the job and in their communities.

Unions approved the first-in-the-nation initiative at a June 5 convocation in Manhattan, creating five powerhouse area labor federations to better coordinate the work of 25 central labor councils. Activists at the event showcased the cooperation that has catapulted workers to victory: When commercial laundry workers who wash restaurant tablecloths and hospital linens at

hospitals around New York City wanted a voice on the job with UNITE, they enlisted the aid of Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 6 and health care union members, eventually winning strong contracts.

"Working in a laundry is hot, dirty, strenuous work," Lamont Thomas, a UNITE Local 331 member, told the 400 leaders gathered. "Without the help of other unions, our victory wouldn't have happened."

In 1999, delegates to the AFL-CIO convention approved a plan to restructure central labor councils and state federations. For more than a year, a 19-member drafting committee of union leaders in New York listened to activists' voices and



**Unanimous:** UNITE President Bruce Raynor and UNITE members celebrate the creation of a New Alliance in New York.

put together the plan approved in June. Steelworkers President Leo Gerard highlighted the importance of a strong, unified union movement in North Carolina, noting that the support of the state federation and several labor councils was crucial in helping USWA members win a strong contract after going on strike against General Tire in Charlotte in 1999.

On June 13, North Carolina union leaders approved New

Alliance in a convocation that included launching the state chapter of the Alliance for Retired Americans and Labor 2002 efforts to elect a worker-friendly candidate for the state's new 13th congressional district and to run against Republican Sen. Jesse Helms. Look for more in-depth coverage on the New York and North Carolina moves to create a New Alliance in the August issue of *America@work*. @

## ILO

### Forced Labor on the Rise

**B**urma is just one example of the countries where forced labor is flourishing around the world, according to a report by the International Labor Organization. "Stopping Forced Labor" calls on governments, trade unions and nongovernmental organizations to redouble efforts to "eliminate this terrible blight on human freedom in all its forms."

More and more, forced labor is taking new, more insidious forms, including urban domestic slavery, compulsory participation in public works projects, prison

rehabilitation labor and short-term bondage, according to the report.

The report suggests governments and local organizations create new development opportunities for poor, rural areas, home to those most frequently targeted for forced labor; set up programs to investigate trafficking in humans; and strengthen labor laws and enforcement to prevent abuses.

For a copy, visit [www.ilo.org/declaration](http://www.ilo.org/declaration) or send \$12.95 to ILO Publications, International Labor Office, CH-1211, Geneva 22, Switzerland. @

## Shareholders Hold Halliburton Accountable

**S**hareholders of Halliburton Co., the energy giant formerly headed by Vice President Dick Cheney, are demanding to know why the company supports the military dictatorship in Burma. The country's government is engaging in massive human and workers' rights violations, including the use of forced labor, according to the International Labor Organization.

Halliburton is one of the few U.S. companies with investments in Burma. Last November, the ILO approved a resolution urging member countries to "review their relations with Burma" and "ensure that such relations do not perpetuate the system of forced or compulsory labor in that country."

Representatives of the AFL-CIO and the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions spoke out at Halliburton's annual meeting in May in favor of a resolution urging the Halliburton board to report on the company's operations in Burma. The resolution won more than 10 percent of shareholders' votes. The two organizations, along with the huge CalPERS pension fund, backed a similar resolution at the Unocal Corp. shareholder meeting.

"We call upon Halliburton to disinvest from Burma," says ICEM General Secretary Fred Higgs. "We cannot condone any economic activity which directly or indirectly supports the regime in Burma until full democracy and human rights, including workers' rights, are restored."

The use of forced labor in Burma (see story, at left) violates the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Unions around the world recently launched a campaign to post those rights in workplaces and communities. The other rights are freedom to organize and bargain collectively, to resist child labor and to work free of discrimination. @



# The Fight for Affordable Prescription Drugs

Bernice Strange pays \$1,000 a year for supplemental insurance to cover part of her prescription drug costs because her Medicare coverage, like that of all retired Americans, doesn't include prescription drugs. Yet the Philadelphia grandmother still must pay an additional \$550 to \$650 a month for the prescription drugs she says she "needs for survival."

"I don't want to be a poor old woman. I want to take senior trips or go to a movie with my granddaughter, Kate, and be able to afford to buy her a box of popcorn. We need a Medicare prescription drug plan," she told a May 23 Capitol Hill rally that included 500 members of the new Alliance for Retired Americans. The Alliance was created by the unions of the AFL-CIO to be a new voice for retired American workers.

The rally with lawmakers and union leaders, the release of a new report on drug company profits and a demonstration in front of the New York City headquarters of Pfizer Inc., the world's biggest drug company, marked the official launch of the new 2.5 million-member Alliance.

In New York, hundreds of Alliance members and their supporters joined the demon-



KAVEH SARDARI/PAGE ONE

**Rx for action:** Members of the new Alliance for Retired Americans rally and lobby on Capitol Hill for an affordable Medicare prescription drug plan.

stration at Pfizer which, like other giant drug manufacturers, makes huge profits on prescription drugs for seniors and others. The Alliance report, *The Profit in Pills: A Primer in Prescription Drug Profits* (available online at [www.retiredamericans.org](http://www.retiredamericans.org)), found pharmaceutical companies enjoyed median after-tax profits of 18.6 percent in 2000, compared with 4.9 percent for other Fortune 500 companies. @

## SPOTLIGHT

### First Organizing Win Under Milwaukee Peace Law

Melding strong legislative, organizing and community outreach strategies, 600 home care workers in Milwaukee won a voice on the job in June with SEIU Local 150.

The workers' win is the first since the September passage of Milwaukee County's labor peace ordinance, designed to minimize service disruptions involving companies that provide transportation and other services for the elderly and disabled. In return for allowing union organizers to distribute information at the worksite and prohibiting employers from giving employees misleading information about unions, unions agree to refrain from strikes, boycotting and picketing. The new members of Local 150 are employed by New Health Services, which contracts with the county. Community groups and religious congregations, which had pushed for the ordinance, also supported workers throughout the campaign.

The Milwaukee County Labor Council kicked off the final stretch of the union election campaign May 25 with a spirited prayer vigil attended by home health care workers and faith leaders from 10 different congregations and three interfaith organizations. Union and religious activists visited workers at home discussing the importance of a voice at work. Up to 14 house-visit teams at a time fanned out on the streets, resulting in 270 door knocks on one day just before the crucial vote.

"It was great to know there are people who care about what we do," says Karen Dundy, a home care worker. "It gave us the strength to go on." Now that they have a union, the workers will fight for better wages, health benefits and paid sick leave. @



COURTESY MILWAUKEE COUNTY LABOR COUNCIL

**Organized:** Home care worker Leonardo Medina celebrates with his mother and client, Juanita Medina.

## Negotiating Family-Friendly Benefits

Leaders of Amalgamated Transit Workers Local 192 negotiated with the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District in northern California to win such pioneering family-friendly provisions as expanded family and medical leave, sick time calculated in hourly incre-

ments and a dependent care trust fund.

But a year after winning the new family-friendly provisions, workers still were frustrated because some supervisors resisted when the bus drivers needed time off. "Even though the union had successfully

negotiated huge improvements regarding family issues, there was still 'old thinking' from mid-level managers," says Christine Zook, Local 192 president. So members of the union's Dependent Care Committee designed a training program for managers in May. It will help managers "address family issues in a more humane way," says Zook.

In another example of unions negotiating work and family benefits, AFSCME Local 11 in Ohio recently bargained to allow members to use their own accrued sick leave to care for immediate family. To stay up to date on similar developments, sign up for the work and family listserv for union members only at [wfnetwork@home.iir.berkeley.edu](mailto:wfnetwork@home.iir.berkeley.edu). @



## CLUW CREATES AWARENESS OF HIV/AIDS

**B**acked by a \$250,000 grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Coalition of Labor Union Women is taking a leading role in increasing awareness and prevention of

union programs and work in individual communities to build greater awareness," says Gloria Johnson, president of CLUW, one of six AFL-CIO constituency groups.

In 1999, women made up 23 percent of the nearly 250,000 reported AIDS cases and 30 percent of new HIV infections. Women of color represent the majority of the new cases, according to the CDC.

"CLUW is the perfect vehicle to reach workers of all backgrounds, including low-wage and immigrant women workers," Johnson says.

CLUW plans to hire a project director and pilot model projects in 2002 through CLUW chapters in Chicago, Philadelphia and Detroit. This year, CLUW will work with the University of California at Berkeley to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to determine the program's emphasis.

For more information, click on [www.cluw.org](http://www.cluw.org). ☐

**Reaching out: CLUW President Gloria Johnson (center) says CLUW plans to increase awareness of HIV/AIDS in the workplace.**

HIV/AIDS in the workplace and in communities.

"We plan to build a network of international and national labor leaders who care about this issue, expand existing

## New Senate, New Hope

**A**lthough Congress in May passed a \$1.3 trillion tax cut—robbing the federal government of money to pay for Medicare, Social Security and other key issues—the new Democratic leadership in the Senate offers renewed possibilities for moving working family-friendly legislation. The

Senate and all committees now are headed by Democrats, after Vermont Sen. James Jeffords's move from Republican to Independent. Here are a few issues to take action on now:

- On June 12, 38 years after John F. Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act, Capitol Hill lawmakers joined AFL-CIO

## Students Take the Pledge

**A**s college graduates flood the nation's workplaces this summer, some will begin their jobs with an eye on more than just the paycheck.

While still in college, students from some 70 campuses signed a pledge stating they would take into account the social and environmental consequences of the jobs they choose. The Graduation Pledge Alliance organization, formed in 1996 and based at Manchester College in Indiana, helps spread the word about the program to campuses throughout the United States.

Nick Studebaker, a recent Manchester graduate, signed the pledge and now is working for AmeriCorps in Vancouver, Wash., helping students with English-language and reading skills. He says taking the pledge "is a way to hold yourself accountable for your decisions and your actions." As a member of Manchester Students Against Sweatshops, Studebaker participated in a "fashion show" of sweat-free clothes. "The pledge is a way to motivate students to explore the effects of their jobs on the public," says the aspiring social worker.

For more information, click on [www.manchester.edu/Academic/Programs/Departments/PeaceStudies/files/gpa.html](http://www.manchester.edu/Academic/Programs/Departments/PeaceStudies/files/gpa.html). ☐

Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson and dozens of women's groups to urge passage of the Paycheck Fairness Act (S. 77 and H.R. 781). The act will toughen enforcement and penalties for equal pay violations.

- Working families are backing bills by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Rep. David Bonior (D-Mich.)—S. 964 and H.R. 665—to raise the federal minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$6.65 in three steps over 18 months. New Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) expects action soon.

- Sens. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) and Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) held hearings this spring on ergonomics protections, and plan more in com-



**Equal pay: Kelly Thomas, a student at Norfolk State, is joined by Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) and Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.) at an AFL-CIO rally.**

ing months. Two bills in committee—S. 598 from Sen. John Breaux (D-La.) and H.R. 1241 from Rep. Christopher John (D-La.)—would require the Department of Labor to issue a new ergonomics standard. ☐

## 100,000 Plus

The Office and Professional Employees celebrated reaching the 100,000-member milestone at the AFL-CIO in Washington, D.C. The May celebration followed OPEIU's executive board meeting, during which union leaders discussed organizing strategies. During the celebration, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney praised OPEIU's "aggressive organizing program," which has increased membership from 79,000 in 1995 to more than 110,000 in 2001. ☐

**CONGRATULATIONS OPEIU**  
**100,000 MEMBERS ----2001!**





Guest speaker: AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka joins UNITE Vice President Clayola Brown and AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer and CBTU President William Lucy at the recent CBTU conference.

## CBTU Addresses Voting Rights Violations

**W**hen 2,100 members of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists met in Florida in late May, CBTU President William Lucy noted: "You might say we are visiting a crime scene—the theft of Florida's electoral votes and the presidency of the United States. We were cheated, but not defeated."

As the centerpiece of CBTU's 30th national convention in Lake Buena Vista, participants at a special town hall meeting examined the serious problems voters, especially African Americans, faced last November and called for real reform of the nation's election laws. Just two weeks after the conference, a U.S. Commission on Civil Rights investigation confirmed

widespread disenfranchisement of African American voters in Florida: 54 percent of the votes disqualified in the election were cast by African Americans, who make up 11 percent of the state's eligible voters.

"The AFL-CIO and all of their unions were successful in getting people out to vote, but then they couldn't," said Adora Obu Nweze, president of the Florida State Conference of Branches of the NAACP.

Town hall participants called for reforms including easy and simple voter registration, stronger and more aggressively enforced voting rights laws with tougher penalties for violating those laws and modern and reliable voting equipment. @

## Cincinnati CLC: Living Wages Address Racial Divisions

**I**n the wake of unrest that spotlighted racial divisions in the city, the Cincinnati AFL-CIO Labor Council strengthened its commitment to economic and social justice.

"We feel that social and economic conditions played a major part in creating the divisions we have today," says Cincinnati AFL-CIO Executive Secretary V. Daniel Radford. "The importance of jobs that pay living wages can't be overstated. Poverty wages with no benefits are just not good enough."

Cincinnati was rocked with a week of unrest in April after a Cincinnati police officer shot and killed Timothy Thomas, a 19-year-old unarmed African American man. @

## OUT FRONT

**7** Days in June was a remarkable celebration of coalition strength in improving life for working families.

In town after town across America, union activists and partners from faith, civil rights and student communities, as well as elected officials, teamed up to say we stand together for workers' right to a voice at work. And together we declared we will not tolerate employer interference in workers' decisions about whether to form a union.

When clergy in Miami demanded respect for workers' choice to be represented by a union and members of Congress at the nation's Capitol proclaimed support for organizing workers, we saw unity in action.

When janitors, child care teachers and graduate student employees united in Philadelphia and union, student and community activists braved Houston floods together, we saw what sharing a moral common ground can mean.

And when activists crossed sexual orientation barriers to support workers at a Washington, D.C. gay- and lesbian-oriented newsweekly and thousands of civil rights and union activists in South Carolina called for justice for the Charleston 5, we saw the strength of "we."

*7 Days in June* reinforces the lesson of the successful sit-in by Harvard students for a living wage for campus workers—an example of increasing campus activism for workers' rights: The seeds we plant by working with allies bear fruit.

These experiences underscore the role community involvement must have in every national and local union, in every state and local labor council. They also reinforce the importance of our efforts to strengthen the state and local union movements through the New Alliance (see page 4) and Union Cities programs.

Working in community coalitions is not a substitute for organizing—but it is one of the most important opportunities we have to make our organizing successful.

And it's also one of our most effective means of demonstrating to antagonistic business people and politicians that we are integral parts of our communities—and that the issues we make our voices heard about are exactly those that concern the working families of our communities, states and nation.

The coalitions we build and strengthen in our hometowns are uniting ministers and rabbis, youths and seniors, white collar, blue collar, pink collar and no collar Americans together around the social and economic justice values we share.

And we all are stronger for it. @

## The Power of 'We'



BY JOHN J. SWEENEY



# Unions

## A PROFESSIONAL CHOICE

By Lauren Lazarovici

**THE DOCTORS AND NURSES** who want the best for their patients, the lawyers who protect the public's health and the engineers who ensure passengers' safety on airplanes are all professionals who seek to contribute to society through their work while looking for opportunities to be creative and excel at their jobs. And more and more, these professionals are seeking a voice at work to help them achieve their goals.

For more than 100 years, artists and teachers have come together in unions, and other professionals have followed their lead. Already, professional workers are represented by unions at a higher rate (23 percent) than the workforce at large (about 15 percent), according to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics. And they make up the fastest-growing occupational category in the

workforce: Professionals will account for almost 27 percent of all employment growth between 1998 and 2008, according to the BLS. Listening to the needs of professionals and enabling them to gain a voice at work is a key part of activists' efforts to strengthen the union movement.

Professionals are finding that new economic pressures—managed health care, corporate mergers, threats of privatization and outsourcing—are reducing the influence they have at their jobs and hurting their ability to maintain the quality of services, according to two new studies. "The Professional and Technical Workforce: A New Frontier for Unions," a recent report by the AFL-CIO Department for Professional Employees, finds these economic forces "threaten to undermine their professional autonomy, working conditions and dignity."

"Changes in corporate structure have professionals looking for a vehicle to protect their professional dignity, advance their training and provide them with a voice in the workplace," says DPE President Paul E. Almeida. "More and more, these professionals are looking for a union that will ensure these rights." Actors, artists and other performers long have recognized the value of unions for professionals. During recent high-profile contract negotiations,

Hollywood's best-known actors and actresses, such as Tom Hanks, have talked about the importance of their unions to them and to the thousands of professional entertainers who don't make six- or seven-figure salaries.

Professionals say it's getting harder to serve the best interests of their customers, clients and patients—and they no longer can count on stable employment, secure benefits, regular pay increases or upward job mobility, according to *Finding Their Voices: Professionals and Workplace Representation*, by the Albert Shanker Institute, a nonprofit organization founded by union leaders and named after the former president of AFT.

"Professionals feel their ability to make decisions and exercise professional judgment is diminishing and they are frustrated with their reduced control," says Richard Hurd, professor of industrial and labor relations at Cornell University.

"The challenge for unions is to show that their role will be to bring these workers a voice and to show that the union will be under the professionals' control." As in any organizing campaign, says Hurd, the key to success is "to listen to the workers." Here's what six professional employees have to say about why they want unions.

**Star solution:** Actor Tom Hanks walks the picket line during the five-month-long Screen Actors Guild/Television and Radio Artists strike in which performers were on the forefront in ensuring new kinds of work in tomorrow's economy translates into good jobs for working people.



COURTESY OF SCREEN ACTORS GUILD



# Alice Faye Singleton

reating asthma, fractures, burns, ear infections—and even child abuse—are all part of a routine day for Alice Faye Singleton, M.D., director of pediatric clinics at King/Drew Medical Center in Los Angeles.

Half of the babies in the neonatal intensive care unit in the medical center are born to drug-addicted mothers, while the medical center's trauma unit is filled with victims of drug-related violence. The doctors and other professionals at King/Drew, which serves low-income clients south of downtown, are dedicated to channeling their professional skills to help heal their community—and Singleton says her union is essential for keeping it that way.

Yet only a few years ago, supervisors treated doctors with “a basic lack of respect,” she says. They ignored doctors’ contributions to the medical center and were not open to solving problems. Many policies weren’t in writing and doctors received widely divergent pay and workloads. Singleton wanted to craft a fair solution, so in 1999 she became involved in a successful unionization drive with the Union of American Physicians and Dentists/AFSCME. Now she’s on the contract negotiations committee.

“There is more fairness since the union is here,” says Singleton. “Managers know unions can hold them accountable. A union is a mechanism to make management listen and communicate with doctors.”

Her union helps her thrive in a career she began working toward as a teenager growing up with nine brothers and sisters in Harlem. Even more, the advantages of union membership extend beyond the center. “The community benefits because doctors will stay here and work for the community,” she says. “They have a sense of mission to take care of patients who are poor.” @

**Pediatric Physician  
Union of American  
Physicians and  
Dentists/AFSCME**

VIRGINIA LEE HUNTER



**R**ecognizing student concern over issues ranging from campus safety to the hours the recreation center pool is open, West Lincoln High School teacher Dave Thureau harnessed that enthusiasm, assigning students a project to write letters to the mayor and other elected officials. The Cleveland students buzzed with excitement when they received responses, emblazoned with official government seals, which Thureau displayed on a classroom bulletin board.

Thureau, a government and world history teacher and member of the Cleveland Teachers Union/AFT, came up with the innovative teaching technique after earning a certification in social studies last year from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. The board—endorsed by AFT, the National Education Association, foundations and business groups—awards the certificates to top teachers who complete rigorous exams that measure mastery of a subject and ability to inspire students. CTU partially funds the Cleveland Teachers Academy, which sponsors coaches to help teachers prepare for the exams.

“The certificate helps bring professionalism to teaching and sets high standards,” says Thureau. “It helps teachers improve our teaching by making us examine how effective we are in the classroom.” Since taking the certificate course, he’s infused his classes with other innovative strategies, like assigning students to write editorials for the school newspaper on current events. “The kids are learning more, enjoying it more and are being more cooperative,” he says.

The lanky father of three also regularly takes part in seminars sponsored by his union on leadership training and such professional issues as behavior management for classrooms.

Thureau is pleased that the latest contract negotiated by the union includes improved wages and health benefits and a procedure to remove disruptive students from the classroom. “Teacher unions such as AFT and NEA push to improve teacher quality,” he says. “They are about better education.” @

# David

**High School Teacher  
Cleveland Teachers Union/AFT**

# Thureau





Administrative Law Judge  
Civil Service Bar Association/  
Teamsters Local 237

# Ilene Shifrin

**A**s an administrative law judge at the New York City Department of Health, Ilene Shifrin hears cases involving violations of the city's health code issued to day care centers, restaurants and other buildings. She takes pride in her work, noting that New Yorkers' health is better protected "because the department is doing its job well," she says.

The union is a key to ensuring the quality of legal services for New York City residents, says Shifrin. The city is better able to retain and recruit attorneys interested in public service because the union fights for good salaries and benefits, she says. The union also negotiated free continuing legal education classes. "Starting lawyers have huge law school debt, and if salaries are too low, you can't attract people who want to protect public health and protect children from child abuse."

Shifrin also knows that lawyers need unions for other reasons. As secretary of the Civil Service Bar Association/Teamsters Local 237, she has had the chance to meet many city-employed lawyers, some with "hair-raising" tales. "I've heard stories about managers who stand at lawyers' desks and write them up if they are two minutes late coming back from lunch," she says. Some lawyers share phones with up to seven others because the city won't provide them with equipment.

When she realized she was doing the work of someone with a higher job title—but not getting the extra pay—Shifrin filed a grievance and won. "The union backed me up and I saw that I could have a voice," she says.

"I never wanted to practice law in the traditional sense," she says. "I wanted to serve the public. And the union allows me to do that." ☐

# Tom McCarty

**T**om McCarty, who designs radar and other communications equipment for Boeing Co. aircraft in Seattle, is among thousands of professionals helping transform an airplane from a tangle of blueprints to a dynamic, graceful tube of aluminum gliding through the sky.

"People believe in the company and take pride in their work," says McCarty. While watching successful test flights, McCarty says he's seen "grown men with tears running down their cheeks. There's a lot of pride in seeing that plane take off."

But like many professionals at the company, McCarty, 57, grew concerned when Boeing merged with McDonnell Douglas, bought divisions of other technology companies and stopped treating engineers as allies in creating quality aircraft. Then Boeing began laying the groundwork to cut engineers' health and pension benefits. "When the company started to treat us as a 'cost,' not a partner, people took great offense."

McCarty supported the drive of his independent union, the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace, to affiliate with the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers in the fall of 1999. In January 2000, McCarty—along with a large majority of Boeing's 20,000 workers—walked off the job in what became the largest private-sector, white-collar strike in U.S. history. During the successful six-week strike,

McCarty, a father of six who is married to his high school sweetheart, used the same engineering skills that make him a successful radar designer: He built environmentally friendly burn barrels to keep picketers warm.

Ultimately, the contract that workers and Boeing negotiated included pay increases and no benefit cutbacks. McCarty also points to another crucial clause: a labor-management "partnership" agreement that gives SPEEA/IFPTE members a voice in the company's decisions. "Having a union is a tool for making our voice heard," he says. "We want to have a role in determining our destiny." ☐

Engineer  
SPEEA/IFPTE Local 2001





# Natividad Dullas



**Registered Nurse  
SEIU Local 790**

When San Francisco city and county officials wanted to shut down Laguna Honda Hospital two years ago, Natividad Dullas and her co-workers knew it was time to take action. Dullas and other members of SEIU Local 790, a part of SEIU's Nurses Alliance, saw the threat as an increasing trend of government abandoning its commitment to public health for seniors and the homeless. In a spirited campaign that brought together the community and workers, Dullas and other union members knocked on voters' doors, phoned their homes and won a ballot measure to keep the hospital open. "The union is helping the community," she says.

The desire to help others is what motivated Dullas to become a nurse. The daughter of two doctors, Dullas jokes that her parents successfully "brainwashed" her and her eight siblings into becoming medical professionals. A registered nurse at Laguna Hospital, the mother of three works in the department of education and training, teaching nurse co-workers about nutrition, fire safety, disaster preparedness, violence in the workplace and spiritual issues that patients face at the end of life. She also is getting a master's degree at San Francisco State University in gerontological nursing, focusing on managing pain for elderly patients. "A lot of our clients suffer from dementia and can't communicate to us when they are in pain," says Dullas. "It is a challenge for the staff to help them."

Dullas' desire to help extends to her fellow workers. "My co-workers would come to me when they had problems with the administration," such as scheduling and being treated disrespectfully, she says. Union leaders tapped her as a shop steward. "I just couldn't take it, seeing my co-workers being treated that way."

Her union gives nurses a voice to solve conflicts, Dullas says, and helps improve patient care by working to keep staffing levels adequate. "With the union, we have a say with the administration," she says. ☐

When food stamp recipients call the customer service center in Houston where Communications Workers of America Local 6186 member Arnulfo "Samm" Almaguer works as an assistant supervisor, they often need immediate assistance.

If there's a new child in the family, or some other circumstance requires more food, they need Almaguer and his co-workers to increase their benefits quickly. "When your pantry is empty, a week is a long time," he says.

If the call center is short-staffed—which it often is because low salaries lead to high turnover—clients will suffer. "Staffing levels impact our clients," says Almaguer. "They affect whether people get their food stamps in a day—or in a week."

Members of CWA Local 6186, the Texas State Employees Union, are working to boost salaries and benefits for workers at the state's Department of Human Services. Almaguer knows that means building the union so it has more clout with state lawmakers who fund the department. "The legislature responds to big numbers," he says. "I joined the union because with numbers comes strength."

Almaguer signs up new union members when workers first arrive at the call center for training. He approaches them in the lunchroom during breaks, telling them about the importance of joining the union. He knows a strong union movement in Texas means better service for low-income people who rely on him and his co-workers for food stamps, Medicaid and other government assistance. "The legislature responds to voters," says Almaguer. "And with the union, we have people power." ☐



**Assistant Supervisor/  
Human Services  
Communications Workers  
of America Local 6186**

# Arnulfo Almaguer



# 7 Days in June

June 9–16

Fernando Cuevas wants union activists to try and imagine what farm workers experience when they try to organize for a voice at work. “While we are standing here rallying, the farm workers are spending their 12th hour in the field today picking cucumbers in the hot sun,” said Cuevas, vice president of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, at a rally in Raleigh, N.C. “They are afraid to lose their jobs, despite the abuse they experience. They need the support of the broader union movement so that they can win a union contract too.”

Like the farm workers Cuevas knows, when workers want to build a better life for themselves, their families and communities, increasingly they are coming together into unions. Together, they win a voice at work to negotiate for better wages, health insurance, a secure retirement and enough time to spend with their families. But just as more workers than ever are seeking to join unions, employers are aggressively using a variety of tactics—some legal, others flat-out against the law—to block workers’ freedom to choose a voice on the job.

Nearly all employers—92 percent—force employees to attend anti-union meetings designed to “change” workers’ minds about wanting a union. Fully 79 percent of employers use supervisors to pressure workers in one-on-one meetings. And in one-third of all organizing campaigns, employers illegally fire workers, according to a September 2000 report by Cornell scholar Kate Bronfenbrenner for the U.S. Trade Deficit Review Commission.



JAY HAMBURGER



JAY HAMBURGER

## Texas

Every June, union activists and their allies among students, community groups, religious congregations and elected officials shine a spotlight on employers’ campaigns to deny workers’ their basic rights. During *7 Days in June*, a week of rallies, hearings, bus tours and more, activists draw attention to workers who want to join unions—and the obstacles they face when they try to come together. What began as a one-day event in 1998 has grown into a week of spirited activities from coast to coast involving activists in more than 150 cities that energizes and inspires their commitment to building the union movement all year round. @

—Laureen Lazarovici





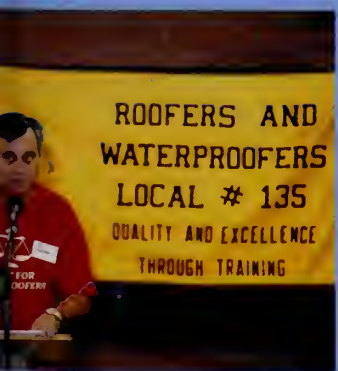
MIKE HAWKINS



JENNY WARBURG



waters didn't stop Houston  
ts (left, p. 12), who dug out the  
Bus when it got stuck in the  
during the council's third 7 Days  
the worksites of just and  
employers. Unionists awarded  
re Here for Workers" honors  
Port of Houston Authority/  
rs Cut Terminal and Southwest  
story of Texas—and a "No  
Here" award to Odjfell  
als, which has fired a worker  
in the campaign to join PACE  
tional Union Local 4-1.



SHERRY BUZBY



More than 7,000 union and civil rights activists rallied at the state capital in Columbia, S.C., to protest trumped-up felony charges against five Longshoremen arrested during a peaceful protest against a nonunion shipper at the Charleston port last year (top). Some supporters came from as far away as Washington State, including Donnie Gill, a member of International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 23, who says: "We are starting to see the potential we can have when we stick together." Activists helped the Farm Workers Organizing Committee get out of a "pickle" at their rally in Raleigh, N.C. (left, center). A delegation of union leaders, including AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson (far left, center), asked officials at Harris Teeter supermarket to support the boycott of pickles from Mt. Olive, which won't respect workers' freedom to form a union. Residential roofing workers (bottom) gathered in Phoenix to expand the "Justice for Roofers" campaign, which has helped many workers win health insurance and protections against pay rip-offs when they joined United Union of Roofers and Waterproofers Local 135. Protections in the contract include properly counting the hours worked and no more deductions from paychecks for equipment.



# In big cities

union activists mobilized to highlight workers' struggles to join unions. Here's a sample:

- At rallies in five cities, activists supporting workers who want a union at Verizon made their voices heard, calling on the company to honor its promise not to harass and intimidate those coming together for a voice on the job. After a successful strike last summer, Communications Workers of America members won a guarantee from Verizon to remain neutral during organizing campaigns in the company's wireless and other nonunion units. AFL-CIO officers joined activists, who rallied in New York City, Baltimore, Dallas, Cleveland and Denver.
- Union activists mobilized to convince the Massachusetts and Wisconsin Democratic parties to pass resolutions at their conventions supporting workers' freedom to organize.
- Some 500 activists in Erie, Pa., marched in their first union parade in a decade, singing union and civil rights songs and listening to a keynote address from Pennsylvania AFL-CIO President William George.
- Ten members of Congress spoke in support of organizing campaigns in their districts and around the world, filling the ornate chambers of the U.S. House of Representatives with the sounds of solidarity.
- As union activists and allies from across the state rallied outside St. Vincent Medical Center in Little Rock, Ark., five clergy members delivered a petition and letter to the hospital's chief executive officer, urging his support for OPEIU members struggling to negotiate a first contract.
- When Portland, Ore., airport officials found out that activists were holding a Workers' Rights Board hearing, they hastily agreed to a meeting with workers and union leaders and decided to ease restrictions on free speech that affect organizers helping Delta Air Lines workers get a voice on the job with the Flight Attendants.
- Activists from the Greater Syracuse (N.Y.) Labor Council and AFL-CIO Union Summer interns gathered signatures from workers at Syracuse University in support of a bargaining to organize clause in the contract the administration is negotiating with SEIU Local 200United. The group also "went shopping" at a nonunion grocery store, wearing T-shirts emblazoned with the question, "Do you want a union?" and the council's phone number.
- The Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor highlighted the connection between political and organizing strength, hosting a breakfast for 14 Cuyahoga County mayors who discussed ways elected leaders can aid workers forming unions. @

—L.L.

The "rat patrol" (left) traveled to events all over Michigan, including this one in Traverse City, where workers want a voice on the job at Elmer's Contracting with Operating Engineers Local 324.



SARA DAVIS

**Michigan**



RON GOULD

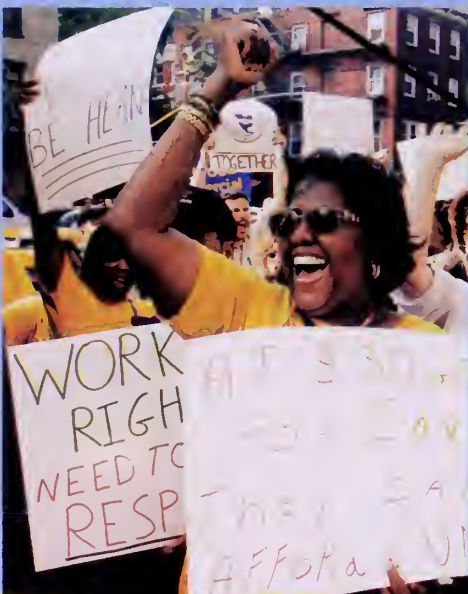
**Chicago**



RON GOULD

**Workers' Rights**

Activists at a Workers' Rights Board hearing in Chicago (above) heard testimony from workers at AT&T Broadband who want a voice on the job with Electrical Workers Local 21. IBEW's national neutrality agreement with AT&T gave workers a boost when they sought to join the union.



CLARK JONES

**New York**



CLARK JONES

New York City activists (above) hopped on board for a two-day Justice Bus tour, stopping to support workers at Jefferson Market who are organizing with United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1500. "It's time the people who handle the high-priced food be treated as well as the food itself," says Pat Purcell, UFCW Local 1500 organizing director.



# MEETING THE CHALLENGES IN Manufacturing

**W**hen workers at the International Special Chemical (ISP) plant in Calvert City, Ky., saw plants around them threatening to close because of globalization, they decided to act before it was too late. "We recognized that it was a new day and we had to try some new approaches or we would be out of a job," says Monty Newcomb, president of Machinists Local 1720, which represents the nearly 400 workers.

Today, employees influence almost every aspect of production in the plant, many without any supervision. New partnerships have resulted in a more productive and safer plant, Newcomb says. The company outsourced \$4 million in work in 1998—and that figure has dropped to less than \$1 million a year. Even though other companies in the area have downsized or closed, ISP has had no layoffs.

The changes at the Calvert City ISP plant came as a result of IAM's high-performance work organization (HPWO), a program running at more than 50 IAM-represented plants that gives workers and managers practical training in building cooperative work environments. The HPWO is an example of creative union responses—ranging from partnerships to political action—and a renewed emphasis on organizing to address job losses in manufacturing.

BY JAMES B. PARKS

While the rest of the U.S. economy is growing, the nation's manufacturing sector has been in a prolonged recession. Manufacturing has lost 470,000 jobs since the beginning of the year, according to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics.

These jobs are being lost because of corporate and government policies that have systematically decimated the manufacturing industry, union leaders say.

"Our government insists on sending manufacturing jobs overseas through misguided trade and economic policies that reward the corporations and ignore the needs and rights of workers," says IAM President Tom Buffenbarger. "These policies have ripped the heart out of the manufacturing sector in this country."

A report by the Economic Policy Institute shows every state lost jobs under the North American Free Trade Agreement. Several states with high concentrations of manufacturing industries lost a disproportionate number of jobs, according to the report, "NAFTA at Seven."

One key to stopping the job drain is to make enforceable labor standards part of all trade agreements, says UNITE President Bruce Raynor. These standards should include the core workers' rights established by the International Labor Organization: the right to organize and bargain collectively, the right to refuse forced labor, the right to reject child labor and the right to work free of discrimination, he says.

"If workers have rights, they can raise their living standards," Raynor says. "Trade agreements like NAFTA that do not contain labor rights provisions lead to a brutal race to the bottom in wages and working conditions."

**Missing pieces:** IAM President Thomas Buffenbarger (left) says government policies have "ripped the heart out of the manufacturing sector."



RAY GROWELL/PAGE ONE



# Find Out More...

- ☐ To find out more about the Working for America Institute, go to [www.workingforamerica.org](http://www.workingforamerica.org).
- ☐ To learn about the Stand Up for Steel campaign, visit [www.uswa.org](http://www.uswa.org).
- ☐ For a copy of the Blueprint for Workforce Excellence report, phone Emily Brennan at 202-216-2753 or fax a request to 202-289-7618.
- ☐ To read the full report, "NAFTA at Seven," click on [www.epinet.org/briefingpapers/nafta01](http://www.epinet.org/briefingpapers/nafta01). @

**Rapid Response:** Steelworkers' members, from left, Ron Lotting of Local 2632, Sam Thomas, Local 5702, and Jim Coleman, Local 2551, discuss communication goals for the union's Rapid Response Network.

## Creating "radical change"

Since 1998, when ISP started using the HPWO program, there has been a "radical change" in the way the company does business, says warehouse worker Ed Feeley, 47, a 26-year veteran at the plant. "It makes you feel like you work with the company instead of for the company."

The HPWO and similar programs that include workers in decision making are critical to rebuilding manufacturing, union leaders say. "Involving workers brings a whole new attitude and a new dynamic," says Bob Stander, the Electrical Workers' manufacturing director. "They know most about how work is done on the shop floor and how to make it better."

Ten years ago, the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO formed another innovative program, the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP), a consortium of employers, unions and community groups. Today the partnership has grown to include 70 member companies and unions accounting for more than 60,000 jobs. "We found the biggest barrier to keeping good union jobs in manufacturing was difficulty in finding qualified workers," says Rhandi Berth, WRTP's assistant executive director. Together the groups developed a program that trains those who are unemployed and seeking work and places them in manufacturing jobs.

The WRTP is one of a growing number of "high-road" partnerships between unions and employers, community groups, academe,

educational institutions and government promoted by the AFL-CIO's Working for America Institute (WAI). Others include the Garment Industry Development Corp. in New York City, Steel Valley Authority in Pennsylvania and the Wichita (Kan.) Area Aerospace Alliance, led by IAM District Lodge 70.

The WAI, along with 4,000 front-line workers, was deeply involved in another important development in supporting manufacturing jobs: setting the nation's first standards that identify basic skills workers need in all manufacturing sectors, from auto parts to aerospace.

The skills, listed in *A Blueprint for Workforce Excellence* from the Manufacturing Skills Standards Council, are the manufacturing equivalent of the basic lessons learned in school. Even though students may change schools, they take the basic knowledge of math, science and English with them wherever they go, just as workers will be able to take the basic manufacturing skills they acquire to other jobs.

## Political action

Trade agreements that allow other countries to export goods to the United States easily without giving U.S. companies comparable access to their markets have caused a flood of imports that undercut manufacturing, according to the U.S. Commerce Department's July 26, 2000, report "Global Steel: Structural Problems and Future Solutions." Nowhere is this more evident than in the steel industry, where 14 U.S. companies have filed for bankruptcy since 1997, six in the past six months.

The Steelworkers developed a grassroots political strategy that combines a local union Rapid Response Network with a "Stand Up for Steel" mobilization designed to spur Congress and the Bush administration to bolster the job security of steelworker families. "Globalization has pushed collective bargaining onto a new playing field that requires development of union structures engaging our members at every level of political power," says USWA President Leo Gerard.

The union and steel companies formed the Stand Up for Steel coalition, which is

GERALD DICKEY



training full-time field coordinators to help mobilize support for the Steel Revitalization Act (H.R. 808). The bill calls for a five-year rollback of steel imports and funds to help save the steel industry.

The Bush administration in June ordered the International Trade Commission to investigate whether some nations are illegally dumping steel into the United States. The action, allowed under the 1974 Trade Act, could result in trade sanctions against countries found to have dumped steel.

"The steel industry is critical to our economic well-being and the industrial strength of America," says Mark Granakis, president of USWA Local 2255 in Cleveland. "Without the act, there will be no steel industry in America's future." (For more information on H.R. 808, visit [www.uswa.org/sra/index.htm](http://www.uswa.org/sra/index.htm).)

Through its Rapid Response Network, the USWA generated 40,000 handwritten letters to members of Congress supporting the bill. The network, established in 1996, consists of activists in every USWA local who volunteer to spearhead mobilization efforts in their locals.

### Top priority: Organizing

Some unions have begun a comprehensive program of organizing to reach out to the more than 16 million nonunion U.S. manufacturing workers, many of whom are in the computer and high-tech industries. "Years



Working smart: Jerry Riley and Benny Watkins, members of IAM Local 1720, work at a steam trap at International Special Chemical.

of bad trade policies have weakened our nation's manufacturing base. As hard as we fight for better government policies, we know that organizing unorganized manufacturing workers is also critical," says UAW President Stephen Yokich. "That's why we have adopted an aggressive strategy to stop the bleeding of good-paying manufacturing jobs to Mexico and to nonunion facilities."

The strategy includes committing more of the union's resources to organizing, gaining support for campaigns through public actions and direct involvement in campaigns by sister and customer local unions, says Bob King, UAW vice president for organizing.

After losing a 1998 election at ZF Industries in Tuscaloosa, Ala., the UAW decided to try again with a more aggressive strategy, says organizer Rick England. The union approached ZF,

which makes automobile axles, through a local at a Batavia, Ohio, Ford Motor Co. plant that had a joint venture with ZF. "We asked them why they were resisting the union in Tuscaloosa when they had a working relationship with the UAW in Ohio," England says. Eventually, the company agreed to remain neutral in the Alabama campaign.

The UAW organized an in-plant committee that kept growing. After four meetings, 62 workers were on the committee out of a total of 260 in the plant—or nearly 25 percent. The committee set up a network to spread the union message to every worker in the plant. "Every person had someone assigned to them to talk about the union," England says. After 66 percent of the workers signed union authorization cards in December, the UAW sought an immediate election. "When the National Labor Relations Board told us they couldn't hold a vote until a month later, we went to the American Arbitration Association and they held one within a week," he says. "The union won by a 2-1 margin."

"That just shows what can happen when you leave the decision on whether to join the union to the workers," England says. ☐



Aggressive organizing: Workers at ZF Industries in Tuscaloosa, Ala., voted for the UAW after the union stepped up its organizing efforts.





# Sitting In

for

**Harvard students' three-week sit-in was part of a growing campus activism opposing sweatshops, seeking a union voice at work and making sure communities' lowest-paid workers make a living wage**

**M**usic, drums and cheers filled historic Harvard Yard in Cambridge, Mass., May 8 when approximately 1,500 students, clerics, teachers, politicians and community and union activists welcomed 26 Harvard students into daylight. Holding red roses handed to them as they walked out of Massachusetts Hall, the students stood with union members as the crowd heard the outcome of negotiations between the Harvard Progressive Student Labor Movement, represented in talks by the AFL-CIO, and university administrators. The

victorious group erupted upon hearing that janitor Jean Phane, an SEIU Local 254 member, and cook Ed Childs, a member of Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 26, would be among those sitting on a new committee composed of workers, students, faculty members and administrators that before the year's end will make a report recommending steps to ensure the economic future of the school's lowest-paid workers.

For 21 days, these PSLM members—including two who had taken part in the AFL-CIO Union Summer training program

—had occupied an administration building. Students waged the dramatic sit-in after their three-year effort failed to persuade Harvard University to give its approximately 1,000 lowest-paid workers a living wage of \$10.25 per hour plus benefits.

The students—who had found it nearly impossible to study for upcoming exams while in constant, highly organized telephone and Internet contact with fellow PSLM members and supporters—may not have bathed for weeks. But they had been well fed by Harvard dining hall workers, members of HERE Local 26, who had confronted university police the first night of the sit-in to bring them pizza—and continued to deliver hot meals from dormitory kitchens.

BY JANE BIRNBAUM



The Harvard sit-in is part of increasing activism on campuses around the country, with students opposing sweatshops, seeking a union voice at work and working to ensure communities' lowest-paid workers make a living wage.

The anti-sweatshop movement took off in 1999 and 2000, after successful protests at universities—including the University of Wisconsin–Madison, Indiana University and the University of North Carolina—that compelled campus officials to establish conduct codes and reveal subcontractors that made the sweatshirts, hats and other material bearing the schools' logos.

Graduate student employees, who over the years have sought a voice at work with UAW and AFT, have stepped up their efforts, with students at Yale University and the University of Pennsylvania among those currently seeking to join unions. Student employee organizing efforts got a big boost in April 2000, when New York University teaching assistants won a court ruling giving graduate student employees at private universities their first-ever right to join unions.

By connecting with unionists through such programs as Union Summer and



# What's Right

during actions like the November 1999 World Trade Organization protest in Seattle, students become increasingly confident and organized, says Dan Hennefeld, a UNITE sweatshop researcher and Harvard grad who co-founded the PSLM in 1997 after participating in the Union Summer program.

Recently, the living wage movement—which fights to win workers benefits and wages that enable them to support their families—has caught fire on campuses like Harvard. It exists in great part because of union members and campus workers reaching out and responding to concerned students, according to Hennefeld. “The Harvard sit-in was a great example of students and unions supporting each other,” he says.

## What it takes to make a Union City

“When I grew up in Cambridge in the late '50s and early '60s, all the dads had union jobs that supported families, and they were politically active,” recalls Bob Haynes,

**A community united: Hundreds of community members turned out to support a living wage for Harvard's lowest-paid employees.**

Massachusetts AFL-CIO president. “Today, Cambridge is a Union City again because we've seen this new cooperation between these different people who came together around issues so clear to everyone who cares about working families.”

One of those issues today is out-sourcing. The crowd in Harvard Yard roared upon hearing the university would cease contracting-out work until the new committee's recommendations are implemented.

Living costs soared during the tech boom of the 1990s in Cambridge, home not only

to Harvard but also the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the software maker Lotus. In 1999, the City of Cambridge passed a living wage ordinance calling for city employees and subcontractors to be paid at least \$10.25 hourly.

Halting out-sourcing was critical for SEIU Local 254, which represents 750 Harvard workers, half of whom are employed by contractors. This year, Harvard Medical School announced it would farm out custodial services, which would have made another 86 janitors subcontractors.



During the sit-in, the workers whose jobs were on the line held their own protest rally at the medical school. "Some of us have spent a lifetime working here," says Phane. "You're loyal and committed, and suddenly the place you cherish most wants to kick you out."

The agreement calls for Harvard to renegotiate, retroactive to May 1, Local 254's contract, which is due to expire in November 2002. According to trustee John Ronches, most of the janitors are part-timers—some with more than 20 years of service—yet they make only \$9.40 an hour while the health coverage they're offered remains unaffordable. In late May, HERE Local 26 successfully concluded negotiations assuring a \$10.25 hourly wage for all workers with at least one year on the job, says Local 26 President Janice Loux.

From the halls of academe to the halls of Congress, activists who care about America's working families cheer the Harvard sit-in's outcome. "To anyone who believes student leadership is a relic of the past, I say come to Massachusetts Hall," Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) told students at the sit-in via a cell phone held to a bullhorn. "These courageous students represent the best of America...you have signaled new hope to countless other struggling low-wage workers in communities across America who deserve a living wage."

Through union-community action, the living wage movement so far has brought new laws to nearly 50 communities nationwide. Now, the Harvard sit-in suggests students are prepared to "follow the nonviolent and respectful tactics of the tradition of civil disobedience," according to Harvard's Catholic chaplain, Tom Brennan, S.D.B., a PSLM supporter who belongs to Harvard's United Ministries. "For three years, the students tried to get everyone to pay attention to this issue," Brennan adds. "When the sit-in occurred, suddenly everyone became acutely aware."

### Students who make a difference

Passion is contagious. The day the Harvard students ended their sit-in, student activists at the University of Connecticut began one to fight for a living wage for campus janitors, members of SEIU Local 32B-J. Their effort ended victoriously after just 55 hours.



COURTESY CAMBRIDGE MAYOR ANTHONY D. GALLUCCIO

**Solidarity:** (From left): AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson, former GCIU President James Norton, SEIU Secretary-Treasurer Anna Burger and AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka (far right) join Cambridge Mayor Anthony Galluccio (center) in highlighting a declaration of support for a living wage.

For many PSLM members, simple contact with workers prompted their interest in a living wage campaign. Law student Aaron Bartley and undergraduate Ben McKean were graduates of Union Summer. A senior this fall, McKean remembers being struck by the contrast between Harvard's wealth and prestige and its underpaid workers. "I would ask the janitors who cleaned my freshman dorm how they were doing," he recalls. "They would tell me they had to work two jobs because Harvard paid less than \$10 an hour."

Lara Jirmanus, who majored in biophysics and was graduated in June, sees her sit-in participation as a protest against the exclusion of some Harvard workers from the university's community. "There are workers at this university living below the poverty line," she explains. "Getting involved enabled me to join the community of workers and students, and to make sure that Harvard was no longer mistreating people."

There was nothing hasty about the students' decision to occupy a building to end the mistreatment. It came only after an extended dialogue with university administrators, who sometimes dismissed their arguments by claiming only a few workers were low paid. In May 2000, a university report recommended job training and health benefits for those putting in 16 or more hours weekly, but rejected tying pay increases to a living wage standard.

"The report missed something very important—that in addition to needing access to training and health care, workers desperately needed wage increases now," recalls Juliet Schor, author of *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure*, who recently departed a position as a Harvard senior lecturer on women's studies to become a Boston College sociology professor. Schor says the university especially exploited the janitors, many from Mexico, Latin America and Haiti, and many female.

The students who sat in were sustained by broad community support: from sixth-graders who baked them cookies to unionists—including AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka, Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson and Executive

Council members—who visited during the sit-in.

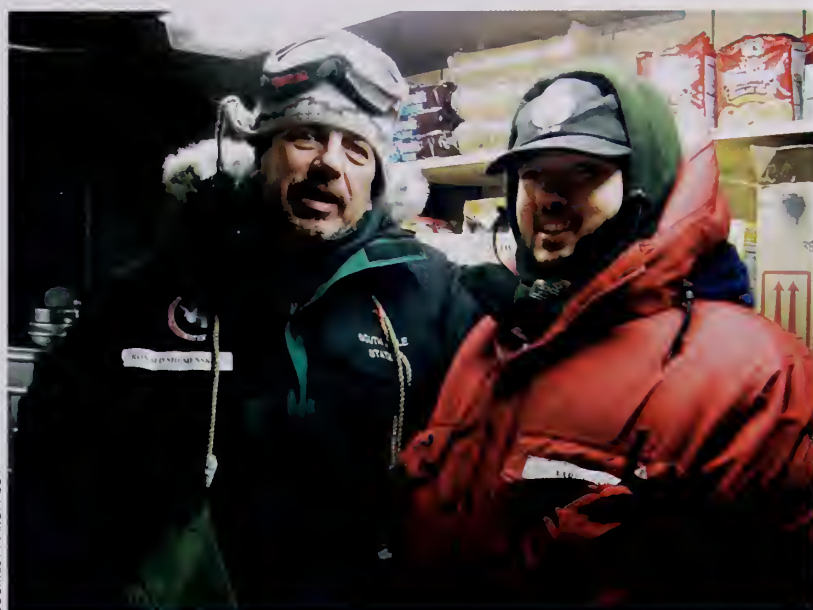
Anthropology professor Michael Herzfeld was among the approximately 300 faculty members who signed a letter supporting the students published in *The Boston Globe* during the sit-in. "They forced many faculty members to get our heads out of the murky water of day-to-day business to realize that we had a serious problem on our hands," he says.

Richard Thomas, chair of the Classics Department, was another sit-in supporter. His daughter, a Harvard sophomore, is a PSLM member who was active outside Massachusetts Hall during the sit-in.

"I hope I've brought her up in a way that would have led her to be a PSLM member, or to have these concerns for others," Thomas says. He is among the professors apprehensive that the academic records of the students who occupied the building may contain permanent notations of probation. In the settlement, the students agreed to this discipline, although many workers urged them not to make this sacrifice.

According to Hennefeld, university administrators are counting on the probation notation to deter continuing student protests at Harvard, where not all living wage issues are resolved. "But the students won't back down because of some administrative scolding or notation in their record," he predicts, "they're prepared to be pretty vigilant on this." ☐





**Cold comfort:** IBEW member Aaron Coy (right) assisted Dr. Ronald Shemenski in his successful departure from the South Pole.

## CHARGED UP AT THE SOUTH POLE

The world held its breath in April as Dr. Ronald Shemenski, critically ill with an inflamed pancreas, was airlifted from the Amundsen-Scott research station in the South Pole in temperatures ranging from minus 60 to minus 91. But the dramatic rescue could not have been successful without two members of the Electrical Workers stationed at the South Pole. Aaron Coy, 30, an electrician and member of IBEW Local 48 in Portland, Ore., and Dave Arnett, 32, a foreman and member of Local 292 in Minneapolis, rigged up the wiring to heat the plane and crew so neither would literally freeze in place.

"Dave and I spent about a week preparing for the rescue," says Coy, who spent 17

hours in the warm-up shack making sure all the connections were working. "We finished our preparations just the day before the plane arrived." In such extreme cold, "You have to do everything with your gloves on and your hands are still freezing."

Coy says he headed to the South Pole "because I have wanted to work all over the world." Working in Antarctica is exciting, Coy says, but it isn't for everyone. "Right now, we are in the wintertime, or total darkness from mid-April to August. The temperatures reach as low as minus 100."

But it's worth it: "I am living and working on a continent that people didn't even know existed a little over 100 years ago. It is truly one of the last frontiers on Earth." @

## An All-Union Union

For Dian Killian and Martha Grevatt, both staunch union activists, it seemed fitting to set Labor Day as the date they celebrated being "unionized." Last year, the two received their civil union license in Vermont—a legally recognized union between two people of the same sex issued by the state—and celebrated back in their hometown, Cleveland, on Labor Day.

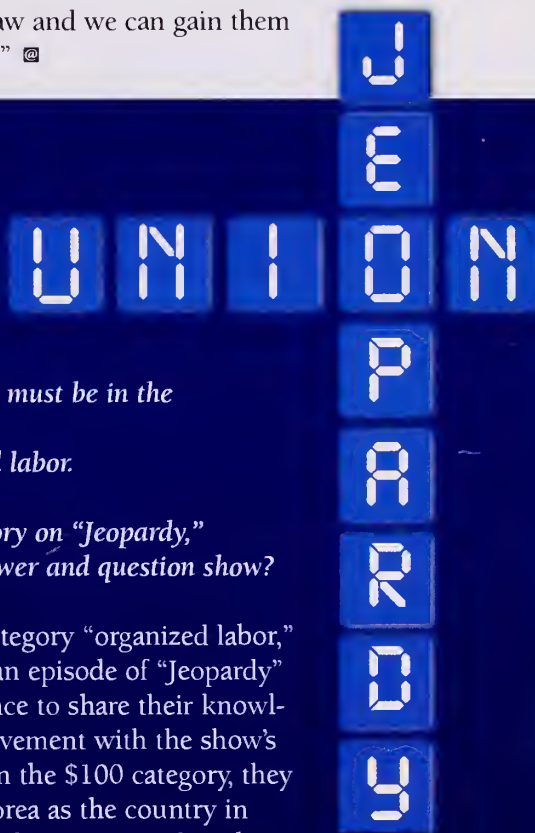
"We're union activists, and we liked the play on words with civil unions," says Killian, an organizer for the National Writers Union, UAW Local 1981. She and Grevatt, a member of UAW Local 122 and a founding member of Pride At Work, the AFL-CIO constituency group for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender workers, hope other gay unionists can benefit from their example.

"Lesbians, bisexuals, gays and transgenders are part of the new union movement's emphasis on solidarity among all workers, including immigrants and people of color," Grevatt says. "Gay workers recognize the need for unions because we don't have benefits such as health insurance for our families through the law and we can gain them through collective bargaining." @



**Unionized:** Dian Killian (left) and Martha Grevatt celebrated their union on Labor Day 2000.

## Let's Play



*Remember, your response must be in the form of a question:*

*The answer is: Organized labor.*

*And the question is...*

*What was a recent category on "Jeopardy," television's legendary answer and question show?*

Confronted with the category "organized labor," three contestants on an episode of "Jeopardy" last spring had a chance to share their knowledge of the union movement with the show's 6.4 million viewers. In the \$100 category, they easily identified South Korea as the country in which a recent strike saved 1,300 Hyundai jobs. Contestants also knew that janitors are seeking justice, correctly identified the Machinists and came up with "locomotive engineer" as the type of union member who belongs to the BLE.

For the category's highest-paying answer, the show's producer's rolled out the answer:

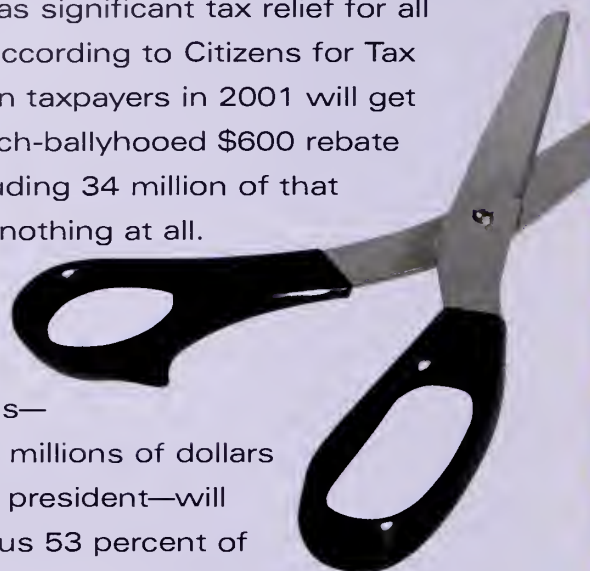
"In 1995, this Bronx-born labor leader became president of the AFL-CIO."

The question is: Who is John Sweeney? @



## The Big Payoff

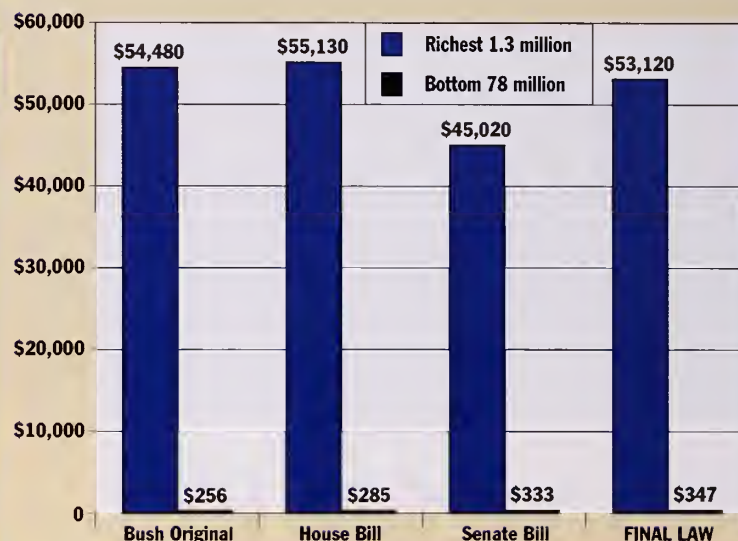
**W**hen Congress passed a \$1.35 trillion tax cut in late May, President Bush hailed the measure as significant tax relief for all Americans. But according to Citizens for Tax Justice, 51 million taxpayers in 2001 will get less than the much-ballyhooed \$600 rebate for families—including 34 million of that figure who'll get nothing at all. Meanwhile, the nation's top 5 percent of wealthiest citizens—those who spent millions of dollars backing Bush for president—will reap an outrageous 53 percent of the total payout. Overall, the tax cut will eat away \$2.3 trillion dollars by 2011—money that is needed to strengthen Social Security, Medicare, education and other key working family programs.



## The Rich Get Richer

Most working families will be lucky if they get a \$347 annual tax cut under the final Bush tax cut plan, while the nation's very wealthiest taxpayers will average \$53,120 in yearly benefits.

**Average Annual Tax Cuts by Version of the Bush Tax Cut Plan**  
(fully phased in at 2001 levels)



Source: Citizens for Tax Justice

"YUM - I'LL JUST EAT RIGHT OUT OF THE POT"



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## Welfare for the Wealthy

Nearly 71 percent of the Bush tax cut goes to the wealthiest 20 percent, while 80 percent of the nation's working families will get only a slim slice of the tax cut pie: 29 percent.

**Share of Benefit When Tax Plan is Fully Implemented**  
(2001 Income Levels)

Income Group	Income Range	Average Income	Share of Cut	
			Original Bush Plan	Final Law
Top 1%	\$373K or more	\$1,117,000	45.0	37.6
Next 4%	\$147K-\$373K	\$210,000	7.8	9.5
Next 15%	\$72K-\$147K	\$97,400	18.9	23.7
<b>Total Bottom 80%</b>	<b>Less than \$72K</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>29.2</b>
Fourth 20%	\$44K-\$72K	\$56,400	15.7	14.5
Middle 20%	\$27K-\$44K	\$34,400	8.4	8.5
Second 20%	\$15K-\$27K	\$20,600	3.5	5.3
Lowest 20%	Less than \$15K	\$9,300	0.8	0.9

Note: Because of rounding, figures may not add up to 100.  
Source: Citizens for Tax Justice



## PUBLICATIONS

When researcher Paula Rayman's daughter asked her, "Is it possible to work and have a life?" the Harvard economist decided to search for the answer. In *Beyond the Bottom Line: The Search for Dignity at Work*, Rayman's answer to her daughter and readers is "Yes"—but only after changing many social and workplace norms. She explores workers' need for dignity on the job and time to care for family. Through case studies of several companies and a look at unions' efforts to limit overtime, raise wages and provide health coverage, Rayman issues a call to action to transform workplaces and society. \$26.95. Palgrave, [www.palgraveusa.com](http://www.palgraveusa.com).

*The Coalwood Way*, by Homer Hickam, is a sequel to the author's *New York Times* best-selling autobiography *Rocket Boys*. Set in Coalwood, W.Va., in the fall of 1959, Hickam's book describes the "rocket boys" as high school seniors whose lives are at a crossroads as they prepare for the future. Hickam, a former member of Mine Workers, AFGE and International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, recalls the ways in which Coalwood was affected by changes from outside. \$23.95. Delacorte Press, [www.bantamdell.com](http://www.bantamdell.com).

## Join 9to5 and Raise the Score

Many co-workers of Nanette Guzman, a New Jersey postal worker, didn't know their rights under the Family and Medical Leave Act—and management wasn't helping. So Guzman organized a group of her co-workers, did her homework on the benefits to employers of family leave in terms of reduced turnover and approached management with a proposal. As a result, her workplace now provides workshops on FMLA rights for all employees.

That's typical of workplace action stories competing in the 9to5, National Association of Working Women's "Raise the Score" contest. Visitors to the group's website at [www.9to5.org/contest.html](http://www.9to5.org/contest.html) can rate their worksite in 10 areas and see how its score compares to an excellent employer. They also can nominate themselves or someone they know who has helped improve workplace conditions for women.

All entrants will receive free "Workplace Negotiating Tips" to use in raising the score at their workplaces.

The nomination form, which must be received by Dec. 15, can be filled out online or printed and mailed to: 9to5, Suite 900, 231 West Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Wis. 53203. Winners will be announced during Women's History Month in March 2002.

## WORKERS' RIGHTS BULLETINS

"Worker Rights Bulletin Inserts," jointly produced by the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice and the U.S. Department of Labor, is an informational CD designed to educate low-wage workers and immigrants about their workplace rights. The CD includes five "bulletins" in English, Spanish, Polish, Korean, Vietnamese, Russian, Hmong, Haitian/Creole and Chinese (simplified and traditional). Topics covered include: "Do You Experience Immigration-Related Discrimination?" and "Your Rights to Safety and Health in the Workplace." The CD also includes contact information (in English only) for 60 interfaith groups that support workers' rights and a listing of Labor Department state offices. To order a free CD, send an e-mail to [toure@nicwj.org](mailto:toure@nicwj.org). Bulletin inserts also are available online for including in congregation bulletins, newsletters or other publications at [www.nationalinterfaith.org](http://www.nationalinterfaith.org).



## VIDEO

"Secrets of Silicon Valley," produced and directed by Alan Snitow and Deborah Kaufman, exposes the hidden downside of



COURTESY BULLFROG FILMS

the computer revolution and juxtaposes the rhetoric of the valley's corporate leaders with the realities of their employees. The 60-minute video focuses on two young activists—a director of a struggling nonprofit computer training center and a worker who organizes his co-workers to stop their employer from shorting their paychecks and then is laid off for raising safety and health concerns. \$59 for union

and community activists (plus \$6 shipping and handling). Bulk rates available. Call: 800-543-3764; fax: 610-370-1978; e-mail: [info@bullfrogfilms.com](mailto:info@bullfrogfilms.com); or visit the website at [www.bullfrogfilms.com](http://www.bullfrogfilms.com).

## MUSIC

"Working Infinity" features 13 original songs written, scored and performed by Mike Stout, a Steelworkers member for more than a decade and member of Musicians Union Local 60-471 in Pittsburgh. Stout, who describes his music as "working-class consciousness rock," includes the song "PhilaPOSH and Moran," in recognition of the Philadelphia Project for Occupational Safety and Health and its longtime director, Jimmy Moran. Their efforts resulted in the passage of a law that gives workers the right to know what chemicals are used in their workplaces—the nation's first such right-to-know law. To order CDs, phone 412-461-5650; fax 412-461-5653; e-mail [cmikestout@prodigy.net](mailto:cmikestout@prodigy.net); or visit [www.mikestout.net](http://www.mikestout.net).

## WEBSIGHTING

[www.icem.org](http://www.icem.org)—The International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM) offers a comprehensive, multilingual website that provides visitors links to thousands of union-oriented websites around the world. The ICEM, which represents 390 industrial trade unions in 107 countries, features on its website labor news, global contracts, a calendar, links to photographs, magazines, books, videos and CDs and international "cyber" campaigns.



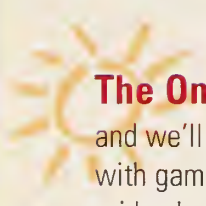


Put the **Sodas** on ice

*Whip up your special potato salad.*

Don't forget the **hot dogs**—and

# Get Ready for **Labor Day** 2001



**The Online Labor Day Festival is back!** Build your special Labor Day Web pages and we'll link to them from the union movement-wide festival site—complete again this year with games, music, video, culture, e-cards and e-activism. Encourage members to submit union pride photos—showing their working families in union T-shirts, caps and pins. For more information, e-mail: [webeditor@aficio.org](mailto:webeditor@aficio.org).



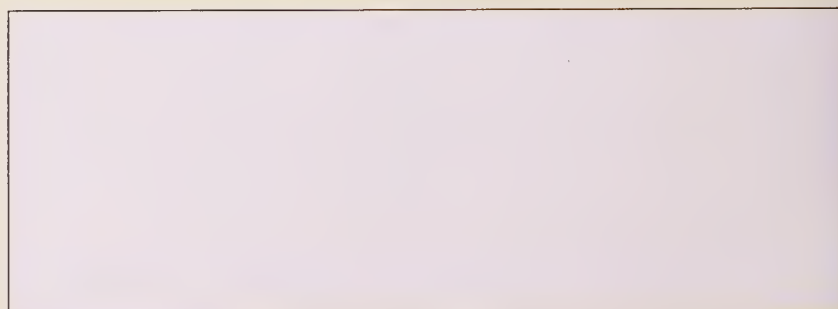
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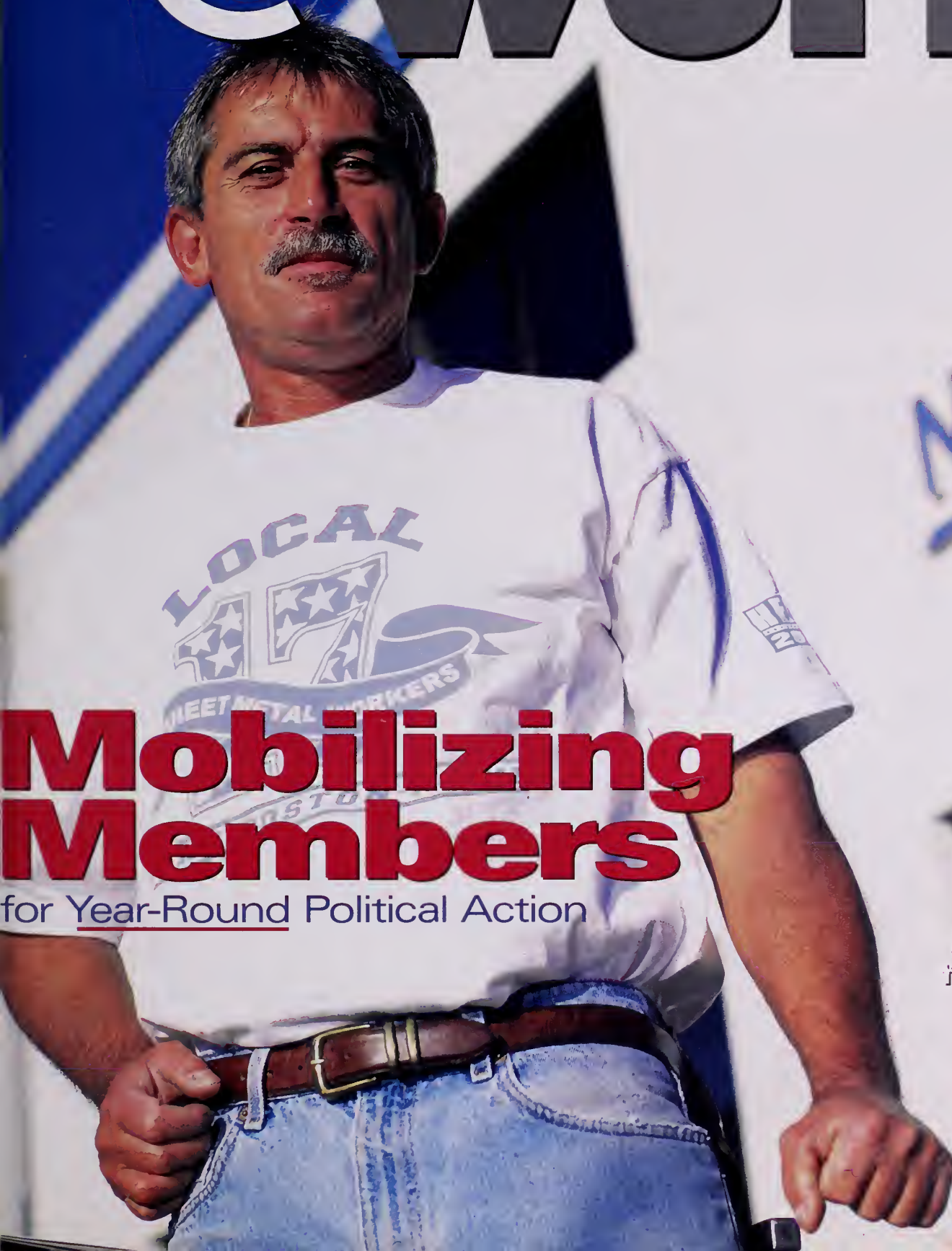




Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

AUGUST 2001

# America @work



## Mobilizing Members

for Year-Round Political Action

### ALSO INSIDE:

Multiplying the Wins  
for Working Families

Making the New  
Alliance a Reality

Global Lessons  
in Guatemala



**"I AM SO PROUD** of the direction that the AFL-CIO has taken toward organizing the unorganized. As a former organizer for César Chávez, I see so many campaigns being won by solid work and tactics it makes me proud. Thank you for great publications and a great website."—*Randolph Healy Cecil, Kensington, Md.*

## SAY WHAT?

### How has your union been involved in multiunion organizing campaigns?

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's *Say What?* Selected responses will appear in a future issue. [America@work](mailto:America@work), 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; phone: 202-637-5010; fax: 202-508-6908; e-mail: [atwork@afcio.org](mailto:atwork@afcio.org).

## HERE'S WHAT YOU SAY

### ABOUT HOW YOUR UNION IS BARGAINING TO HELP WORKERS ORGANIZE:

"CWA has made card-check and neutrality agreements a priority in negotiations. Without a card-check or neutrality agreement, it is much more difficult to organize....A study by the Center for Labor Studies [shows] the success rate in gaining union recognition with card-check and neutrality agreements [is] 67.7 percent...compared with 51.2 percent [for a National Labor Relations Board] election....After negotiating a card-check agreement with Valor Telecommunications, we...organized approximately 350 employees in Texarkana, Texas, Carlsbad, N.M., and Broken Arrow, Okla. Without the expedited card-check agreement, the ability to organize this group of workers would have been drawn out and costly. A big step in protecting our future is negotiating agreements that make organizing easier."—*Mike Simmons, president, CWA Local 6171, Krum, Texas*

**"I AM GLAD** that America has labor unions to help the people that do the work to make the corporate giants rich and even richer! Please don't let 'right to work' come into Oklahoma! (I am not affiliated with any union at this time, but still strongly believe in unionized leadership for employees!)"—*Rochelle Gates, Vinita, Okla.*

**"[FAST TRACK** means] the exporting of jobs, more and faster trade deals like NAFTA, smaller wages, more attacks on workers' rights and more devastating pollution. [It also] removes a crucial cog in the decision making process of our nation by usurping the democratic process. Instead of having debate on these issues and a chance for the populace to have a say...as is the case currently, these agreements will be decided upon by one individual, the president...who all too often aligns himself with the narrow interests of the business class."—*Charlie Laskonis, recording secretary, IBEW Local 364, Rockford, Ill.*

**"I...HAVE CONTACTED** my congressman today to ask him to oppose the Fast Track...for the [Free Trade Area of the Americas]. There should no longer be any doubt in the minds of workers in the United States that NAFTA was an absolute disaster for us....What were once decent union jobs that paid a living wage in the United States and Canada have been turned into dead-end, low-wage jobs under horrid working conditions in Mexico....This is just one of the many [examples] of the Bush-led attack on workers' rights and lives."—*Dave Coker, CWA Local 3607, Greensboro, N.C.*

**AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in [America@work](mailto:America@work).**



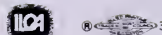
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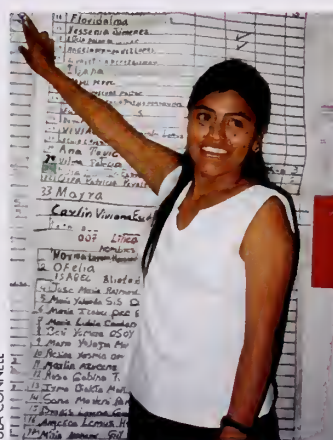


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A group of U.S. women activists who traveled to Guatemala to talk with maquila workers, study Spanish and meet with a range of union and human rights leaders returned home renewed for the struggle for global justice



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## MOBILIZING MEMBERS FOR YEAR-ROUND POLITICAL ACTION

Registering members to vote and educating them on the issues isn't just for election years



VIRGINIA LEE HUNTER





**Class of 2001:** Members of the third graduating class from the National Labor College celebrate a new start in their efforts to build a strong union movement.

## National Labor College Graduates 118

When Alberta Jordan-Rigsby goes out to help organize or to meet with other union members in Detroit, she carries a powerful new tool to help her build the union—a college degree. Jordan-Rigsby, 38, a field representative for the United Food and Commercial Workers, and 117 other union members and staff were graduated June 30 from the National Labor College of the George Meany Center for Labor Studies, the third graduating class in the school's history.

"When we negotiate with management, we're sitting across the table from folks who have MBAs and Ph.D.s who think union members are just blue-jeans-wearing folks who only know how to carry picket signs," says Jordan-Rigsby. "We are much more than that and this degree helps me show them that we can take our place at the table as equals."

Graduates included 104 students from 28 unions who earned bachelor's degrees in seven areas of union studies from the college. Another 14 received the first master's degrees in public administration from the joint National Labor College program with the University of Baltimore.

"The curriculum provides union activists with the skills and knowledge to build strong unions," says Sue Schurman, National Labor College president. "The challenges facing the union movement in the new economy will require not only skills in organizing, collective bargaining and leadership, but critical-thinking and problem-solving abilities that will help them develop new union strategies."

As far back as 1899, AFL President Samuel Gompers proposed creating a university of labor to meet the educational needs of the nation's working men and women. That dream became reality in 1997 when the AFL-CIO established the National Labor College, enabling students to pursue degrees while continuing their trade union work.

For more information about the National Labor College and its programs, visit [www.georgemeany.org/nationalnlc.html](http://www.georgemeany.org/nationalnlc.html). Call 800-GMC-4CDP (462-4237) for information on the bachelor's degree program and 301-431-6400 for information on the master's degree program. ☐

## AFL-CIO SURVEY FINDS WORKERS MISTRUST BUSH

By a large margin, workers say the Bush administration cares more about protecting the rights of business than those of workers, according to a new survey released July 25. Commissioned by the AFL-CIO and conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates July 5-9, the survey found that 49 percent of respondents say the administration cares more about protecting the rights of employers and business, while only 4 percent say it cares more about protecting workers' rights. Thirty-five percent say the administration cares roughly equally about both. Among African Americans, the percentage saying the Bush

administration cares more about protecting employer rights rises to 63 percent, and among union member households it hits 60 percent.

Nearly two-thirds of those surveyed—67 percent—say they do not trust the administration very much to take positions in their interests on issues involving workers' rights on the job. For example, when asked how much they trust the administration to take positions in workers' interests on a reasonable minimum wage, 63 percent answer "Not at all" or "Just some."

The survey questioned 801 respondents, 16 percent of whom were members of union households. ☐

## STOPPING Cross-Border Trucking

President Bush has vowed to veto legislation backed by working families and their allies in Congress who, in June, slowed a plan to give Mexican trucks and buses—many of which do not meet U.S. safety standards—broader access to U.S. roads.

The U.S. House of Representatives approved an amendment to the transportation appropriations bill to block Bush administration plans to grant Mexican trucks and buses conditional access to American highways for 18 months while they undergo safety reviews. The vote, passed by a 2-1 margin June 26, would maintain Clinton administration restrictions that keep the vehicles within a narrow commercial zone beyond the U.S.-Mexico border.

The AFL-CIO and transportation unions oppose the

administration's plans, which, under the North American Free Trade Agreement, would allow unsafe trucks unlimited access to U.S. highways, endangering drivers.

The vote came after a cross-country caravan of Teamsters-driven trucks, which stopped at several rallies in protest of the administration's plans.

Under the amendment, the government cannot grant permits to Mexican trucking or bus companies that fail to meet U.S. safety standards. The AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department is working with Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.) and Transportation subcommittee chairwoman Patty Murray (D-Wash.) to obtain a similar amendment in the Senate version of the bill, says TTD Executive Director Ed Wytkind. ☐



# Who Pulled the Plug on California?

From Fresno to San Diego, hundreds of activists in six California cities mobilized for a "Stop Rolling Blackmail" campaign in June and July to protest President George W. Bush's refusal to act on the state's energy woes. "If we don't speak up, big corporations and the Bush administration will resolve this crisis on the backs of working families," says Art Pulaski, California Federation of Labor executive secretary-treasurer. "We lobbied and held press conferences in Sacramento this spring. Now it's time to take the action to the streets."

At the first demonstration June 6, nearly 400 union members and community supporters rallied at Oakland's Federal Building and marched on the Duke Energy Corp.'s power plant near Jack London Square to serve a "people's notice of eminent domain." In June, three former workers for Duke at its Chula Vista, Calif., plant told a state Senate committee that Duke had manipulated electricity production to fix prices, and also had thrown away spare parts to prolong plant outages.

Bud Beal, a retired machinist and member of IAM Local 1546 who took part in the Oakland rally, said "these constantly growing energy bills mean a lot to working people, especially seniors on fixed incomes. The Bush administration isn't doing anything because the energy companies supported his campaign. And Bush did not carry California in the election, so he's hung us out to dry." @



Electric action: Union members spearheaded statewide protests against the Bush administration's refusal to solve California's energy crisis.

## SPOTLIGHT

### Partners for Better Health Care

Nurses are joining unions at an increased pace to gain a voice on the job and ensure quality patient care, says Cheryl Johnson, RN, president of the United American Nurses. And in voting June 28 to affiliate with the AFL-CIO, delegates representing more than 100,000 UAN members "sent a message loud and clear that we are ready to roll up our sleeves and get down to the business of solving together the patient care crisis in this country," Johnson says.

The UAN is the national collective bargaining arm of the American Nurses Association, the largest professional association of registered nurses in the country. With the addition of the UAN, the AFL-CIO now represents 1.2 million health care workers. This fall, the federation will convene a summit of top nurse union leaders to collaborate on a strategy of support and aggressive organizing.

In a February survey of more than 7,000 registered nurses by the ANA, respondents said deteriorating working conditions have led to a decline in the quality of nursing care. Three quarters said the quality of nursing care at the facility in which they work has declined over the past two years, while 56 percent of nurses think the time they have available for patient care has decreased. In addition, more than 40 percent of nurses surveyed said they would not feel comfortable having a family member or someone close to them cared for in the facility in which they work. @



Nurses united: Delegates for the 100,000-member United American Nurses unanimously vote to join the AFL-CIO.

## A LEGAL SUMMER

Combining her commitment to helping working families with her legal training, Trisha Booker is spending the summer in Dallas aiding a first-contract campaign with the Postal Workers at Letitia Farrell

Trucking Co. A recent graduate of the University of Tennessee Law School, Booker is one of 11 interns in the AFL-CIO's Law Student Union Summer, a new program that enables law students to meet with workers, learn about the obstacles they

face when forming unions and support workers' struggles through the legal process.

Booker says the experience has opened her eyes to the realization that current laws don't do enough to safeguard workers' rights: "It is the organizing that gets things done."

Activists in the AFL-CIO's other summer intern pro-

grams include 28 future clergy leaders in Seminary Summer and four students who are in Egypt, Mexico, Romania and Sri Lanka as part of International Summer. More than 200 are taking part in the sixth year of Union Summer, aiding dozens of organizing and contract campaigns. @



# Social Security Shakedown

**W**hile past commissions formed to study Social Security have included a variety of perspectives, the one appointed in May by President George W. Bush is stacked: From co-chair Richard Parsons, AOL Time Warner's chief operating officer who managed Time

drafted plans that would slash guaranteed retiree benefits and raise the retirement age to 70 or endorsed similar concepts, according to *The Wall Street Journal*.

On June 18, in the posh Windows on the World restaurant atop New York's World Trade Center, Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill brazenly cheered Wall Street's interest in cannibalizing Social Security by hosting a lunch for top Wall Street executives. The goal: To raise money for a \$20 million TV ad campaign pushing the Bush scheme.

But outside the World Trade Center, union activists as well as representatives from the AFL-CIO Alliance for Retired

Americans, the New York State Senior Action Council and the 2030 Center joined AFL-CIO Secretary-

Treasurer Richard Trumka to protest this effort to endanger working families' safety net for the retired and people with disabilities.

"These private investment accounts will pay [Wall Street] an estimated \$240 billion in fees and commissions over the next 12 years alone," said Trumka, "making it the biggest shakedown of American taxpayers in the history of our country."

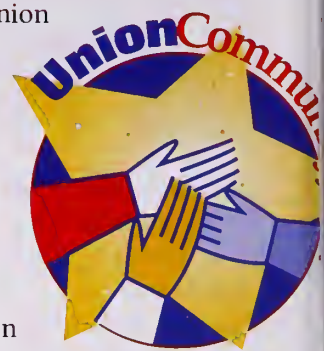
The commission will hold field hearings around the country in late summer. For more information or to get involved in the fight to strengthen Social Security, visit [www.aflcio.org/socialsecurity](http://www.aflcio.org/socialsecurity). ☐

# Union Community Fund to Grow

**T**he Union Community Fund, the union movement's national charity, received a \$90,000, two-year grant from the Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust in Boston. The grant will provide seed capital for regional staff and training to develop Union Community Fund programs in New England.

Launched last year, the Union Community Fund gives working families a voice in determining how their charitable dollars and volunteer hours are spent. Local boards of union members and community representatives evaluate programs for potential Union Community Fund support to ensure their work reflects the values and concerns of working families.

Fund-raising drives are taking place in Arizona, Houston, New Orleans, San Jose, Calif., Seattle and Washington, D.C., with plans to add six to eight sites this year. ☐



## The Write Move

**T**he New York Times Co. and other publishers committed copyright infringement when they resold free-lance magazine and newspaper articles via electronic databases without asking the authors' permission or paying them extra, according to a 7-2 landmark decision by the U.S. Supreme Court. Nine free-lancers, including Jonathan Tasini, lead plaintiff and president of the National Writers Union/UAW Local 1981, filed the suit.

*The New York Times* immediately followed up on the June 25 ruling by announcing it would delete from its electronic archives free-lancers' work that appeared from 1980 through 1995 unless the authors signed agreements relinquishing any claims, including the right to payment.

That action drew an equally quick response from the Writers Union, which,

on July 6, filed a new lawsuit against the *Times*, challenging the agreement the *Times* is asking free-lancers to sign. "This contract, which asks people to sign away rights that the U.S. Supreme Court says they have, is illegal, unconscionable and unenforceable," says Tasini.

Nationwide, Writers Union members are cheering the Supreme Court decision. "People need to know there is hope in this difficult profession, and this is a feisty group that will go to bat for them," says Los Angeles-based free-lancer Carol Mithers, who joined the union the day it began in 1981.

One option for writers seeking fair compensation for their work, Tasini says, is the Publication Rights Clearinghouse, which the union established in 1994 to help writers and publishers license copyrighted material. For more information, visit [www.nwu.org](http://www.nwu.org). ☐



CLARK JONES

Warner's "permatemps" system, to Estelle James, who promotes privatization from her World Bank perch, all 16 members "share the president's view that personal retirement accounts are the way to save Social Security," according to White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer. In fact, some of the commission members either have



## Justice at Avondale

**W**orkers at the Avondale Shipyard in Louisiana won a major victory in their eight-year struggle for justice when an administrative law judge in July ordered the shipyard to rehire 22 illegally fired workers. He also ruled Avondale must repay \$5.4 million in legal fees it had billed to the U.S. Navy in its attempt to prevent union representation. The company has said it may appeal the ruling. "When workers have fought as hard as we've fought, it's inspiring that the judge finally made the ruling that he did," says Chris Burnett, president of Boilermakers Local 1814 and a 20-year Avondale veteran.

Judge Philip McLeod said Avondale's former management committed 141 labor law violations. He was especially critical of the company for spending taxpayer monies to fight the union.

Workers at Avondale sought a voice at work six years ago because of low pay—they received 29 percent less on average than workers at other private Navy contractors—and health and safety concerns that were literally life threatening. Seven Avondale workers died on the job between 1990 and 1999, a death rate three times higher than that at other shipyards with major Navy contracts.

The company refused to recognize the union or bargain a first contract. In 1999, Avondale's new owners, Litton Industries, agreed to recognize the union and bargain. Northrup Grumman now owns the shipyard. ☐

## VIEQUES PROTEST HIGHLIGHTS INJUSTICE

**D**ennis Rivera, president of Health & Human Service Employees Union, 1199/SEIU, was sentenced July 6 to 30 days in federal prison for trespassing on Vieques, the Puerto Rican island the U.S. Navy has used for bombing practice for more than a half-century. AFL-CIO President John Sweeney joined the Rev. Jesse Jackson and members of Congress at the federal courthouse in San Juan to support Rivera, who was tried with environmentalist Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Rivera, riding in a local fisherman's boat with Kennedy and actor Edward James Olmos, entered the bombing area in April.

"Not only are we outraged at the bombing, we are outraged at the treatment of peaceful demonstrators," Sweeney says.

In May, the AFL-CIO Executive Council authorized a letter from President Sweeney asking President Bush to stop the bombing and repression of protesters. While Bush ordered the bombing to stop in May 2003, "that's not soon enough for the working families there today," says Jimmy Torres-Velez, AFL-CIO field mobilization director for Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

In June, Torres-Velez served 10 days in a Puerto Rican federal detention center for his protest activities. Torres-Velez says after each visit with lawyers, family or community members, guards conducted

full body searches on the protesters, including "our bodies' most intimate areas." Rivera and Kennedy, also sentenced to 30 days, served their time in that same prison facility. ☐



Dennis Rivera,  
president of Health  
& Human Service  
Employees Union,  
1199/SEIU

## OUT FRONT

**L**abor Day is a good time to take a look at where we are as a movement and where we are heading.

One hundred nineteen years after America's first Labor Day parade, we're still fighting for the freedom of working people to choose to improve their lives through union membership. Not only are employers still waging war against workers struggling to organize, they have gained support from a presidential administration so beholden to Big Business it has launched the most concerted attack on workers' rights and protections in a generation.

We are up against a gross corporate agenda warping the global economy to produce profits at any human cost. And the massive millionaire tax cut pushed by President George W. Bush threatens America's ability to invest in meeting such basic needs as education, health care and retirement security.

In this environment, America sorely needs the vision, values and activism of working families and their unions.

We have a job to do in refocusing our nation on a vision for the future that is free of social and economic injustice—and in moving our society to a new level of commitment to the shared values of respect for work, family and community.

It's time for us to challenge America to unite in battle against the unnecessary evils that drag down living standards and drive wedges between us: the loss of good jobs, neglected and overcrowded schools, child poverty, lack of health care, unaffordable prescription drugs, enduring forced labor and child labor, trade deals that hurt workers around the world, exploitation of immigrant workers, discrimination in every form and damage to our environment.

We must reject the claim that America can't afford to carry out its vision of the future we want our children to inherit. We can't afford *not* to invest in our future.

And we must challenge ourselves to bold new levels of organizing and the scale of growth that will make it possible for us to elect and hold leaders accountable to honor the people who build our homes, clean our offices, teach our children, patrol our streets, care for our sick and elderly loved ones, fly our planes, drive our trucks, build our cars and more. It will require unprecedented union strength to redirect this economy to respect workers, our families and our communities.

This Labor Day, talk to people, get on the airwaves, address your congregation and issue a challenge to join today's unions in an all-out crusade to bring about a better future for working families.

Together, we can do great things. ☐

## Labor Day 2001



RICK FRIEDMAN

BY JOHN J. SWEENEY



# Multiunion

## Multiplying the Wins for Working Families

BY LAUREN LAZAROVICI

When UAW Local 7777 member Johnnie Dorsey goes to work as a slot machine technician in Detroit's newest casino, the Greektown, he labors with waiters who keep thirsty gamblers hydrated, engineers who keep elevators running smoothly and retail clerks selling souvenirs. And since April, these 2,600 workers are more than simply colleagues: They are union brothers and sisters, brought together by the Detroit Casinos Council, a multiunion organizing campaign that magnified the strengths of four international unions and won a voice at work for all 6,600 gaming workers in the city. "It was unique to

see all the unions together as one," says Dorsey. "It really shows that the unions are there for all the workers."

Celia Makris, a home health care aide in San Diego, doesn't work side by side with her colleagues. Her days are spent giving one-on-one attention to an older client who needs her help getting out of bed, going to doctors' appointments and bathing. And yet, like Dorsey, Makris has a voice on the job through the joint efforts of thousands of members of SEIU and AFSCME affiliate United Domestic Workers (chartered in 1979 with the aid of Farm Workers founder César Chávez). Together, the unions formed the California Homecare

Council last year. Since then, the council has built on successful efforts to win passage of a state law granting organizing rights to home care workers and requiring counties to designate an official employer for the low-paid workers, who had

been classified as "independent contractors" without such benefits as health insurance and sick leave. Together, the unions achieved funding for statewide wage increases and health insurance for home care workers totaling \$107 million in 2000, \$57 million for a \$1 hourly raise in home care workers' wages this year and millions more in federal dollars.

Leaders of the two unions agreed on areas of the state each would concentrate on, changing local laws and ultimately organizing workers in 29 counties each. In Monterey and Sacramento, SEIU locals won ordinances enabling 11,200 home care workers to join the union. Building on those

successes, UDW/AFSCME leaders in San Diego County—not a locality with a tradition of expanding workers' rights—fought for an equitable local law. On June 12, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors unanimously passed its ordinance, paving the way for thousands of home care workers to become UDW/AFSCME members. "We all face the same issues," Makris says of her SEIU colleagues. "We were united for the same cause. Now we're going to go help other counties."

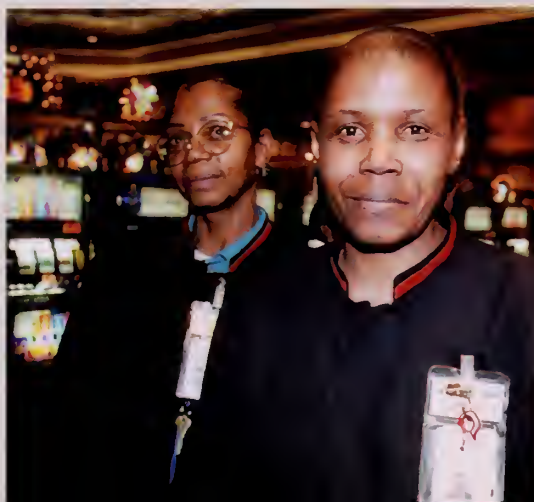
Union leaders are collaborating in multiunion organizing campaigns in an effort to multiply the number of workers winning a voice on the job. As in Detroit and California, unions cooperate in all types of organizing efforts, ranging from campaigns within such large, geographically concentrated industries as casinos to those with literally thousands of individual worksites, as in the California home care campaign. Unions are coming together to organize airport workers in Seattle and public employees in Puerto Rico using the same strategies. Leaders of these campaigns say unions should agree on jurisdictional issues early, build trust slowly, involve workers in each other's struggles and combine research, organizing and political resources if they want to win.

"This strategy is about building strength for union members," says Stephen Yokich, president of UAW, which also has been part of a multiunion organizing campaign in Stamford, Conn., in which taxi drivers recently won a strong first contract. "In many cases, that takes many unions working together."



REBECCA COOK

**Winning bet:** After HERE, IBT, IUOE and UAW came together as the Detroit Casinos Council, the unions signed up 6,600 members (this page and bottom left, page 9).



REBECCA COOK



# Organizing



## Detroit

Three years ago, Detroit voters passed a ballot measure legalizing casino gambling. With the prospect of thousands of new jobs, union leaders wanted to make sure those workers would have the freedom to choose a voice at work without employer harassment. That's when Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 24, Operating Engineers Local 547, Teamsters Local 372 and UAW Local 7777 formed the Detroit Casinos Council.

It was a potent combination, building on the unique strengths of the union partners.

**Lift off: More than 400 airport workers from two dozen unions and community groups rallied at SeaTac in April to lay the groundwork for a multiunion organizing campaign (above and bottom right).**

"HERE had leverage with the casino companies because of its relationships in Las Vegas and its history of card-check there," explains UAW's Yokich, referring to the process in which an employer agrees to recognize the union after a majority of workers sign authorization cards. "And UAW has strength in the community and with the area's elected officials because of our large membership" in Detroit, he says.

Before starting any organizing drives, the four unions agreed on which types of workers would be in which bargaining unit. Each unit is serviced by one of the four unions of the Detroit Casinos Council. "We were clear from the beginning on the roles and responsibilities of each union," says HERE President John Wilhelm. News reports indicated that business interests secretly were looking

forward with relish to a battle among unions, knowing that conflicts would weaken workers' bargaining strength. "Unions before used to fight each other for members," acknowledges Veronica Stephenson, an IBT organizer. "In coming together, unions could organize more people more quickly." During the campaign, organizers invited workers to sign cards shift by shift, regardless of which unit they would belong to, because the card designates the Detroit Casinos Council as the union representative. For instance, Stephenson would collect authorization cards from potential HERE, UAW and IUOE members, as well as Teamsters. Today, workers at all three Detroit casinos belong to unions: Workers at MGM Grand and MotorCity already have strong contracts, and those at Greektown won their union in April. "These companies have such deep pockets," says Stephenson. "For unions to grow, we have to come together."

## Seattle-Tacoma Airport

With plans for a 40-foot-high glass wall affording sweeping views of the Olympic Mountains, the designs for the new sections of the Seattle-Tacoma (SeaTac) Airport are "beautiful," says the Rev. Eugene Satterwhite, pastor at Shekinah Glory Church in nearby Tacoma. But all the glass and steel construction is meaningless for the workers inside the walls, says Satterwhite, if union members lose their hard-won benefits, wages and decision to have a voice on the job.



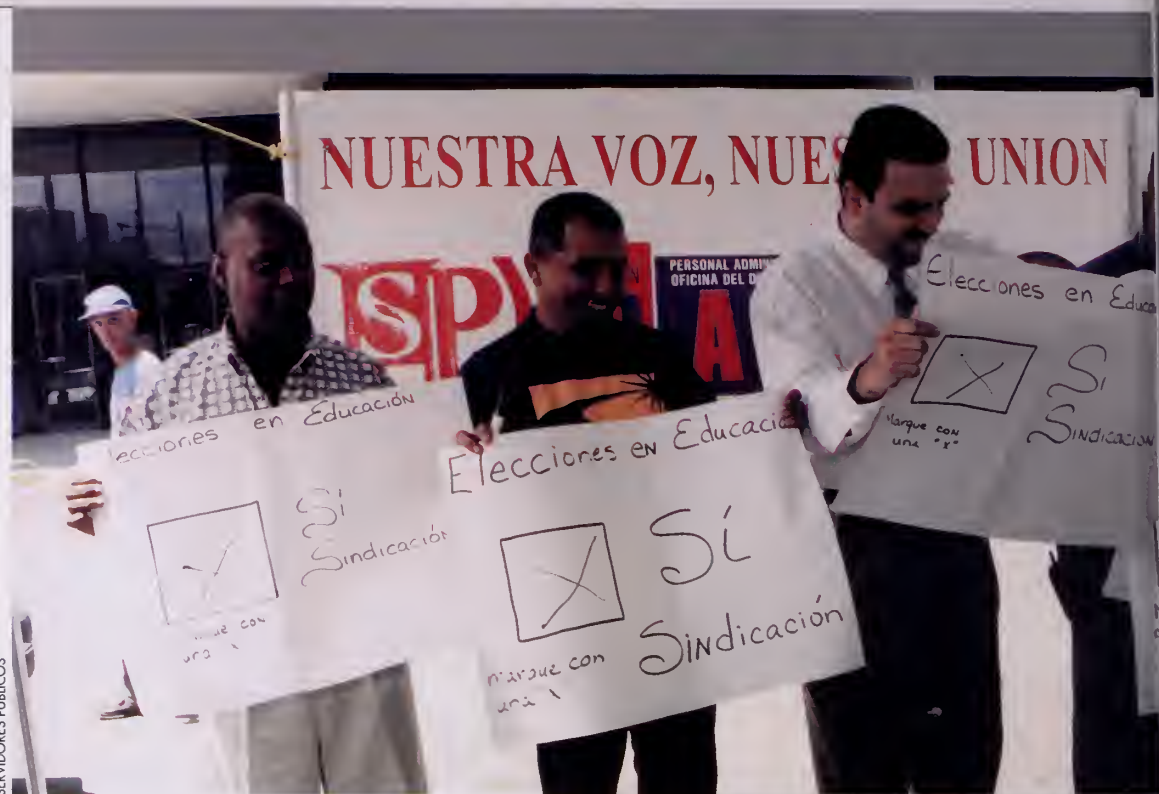


Right now, about 800 members of HERE Local 8 and United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1001 have one contract with the one company that runs nearly all of the airport's shops and restaurants, Host Marriott Services. The company's contract to serve the airport expires in 2004—the same year most of the renovations are scheduled to be completed. Port of Seattle commissioners are mulling over how they will handle the food and retail concessions in the revamped airport. Union members and leaders are concerned that a patchwork of companies will take over, decimating the workers' hard-fought wages and benefits, as well as its negotiated career ladder that helps workers learn new skills.

In April, more than 400 airport workers from two dozen unions and community groups—including Flight Attendants, Air Line Pilots, IBT and Machinists—rallied at SeaTac and crowded into a port commissioners' meeting. Their efforts are laying the groundwork for a multiunion organizing campaign modeled on successful strategies used at airports in Los Angeles and San Francisco, in which 2,000 workers have won a voice on the job in quick succession. Union leaders at such airports as Baltimore and Denver are building similar coalitions.

The struggle on behalf of restaurant and retail workers is fostering the sense of solidarity vital to a multiunion organizing campaign. "Any preheld notions of 'our' union versus 'their' union dissolved as we pulled on sandwich boards and were ushered onto the crowded, yellow buses that delivered us to the airport," says Seattle-based IAM Local Lodge 1351 member Kathy Hartley, a reservation agent for United Airlines. As she spoke at the rally and looked out at the crowd, Hartley says, she saw "a gathering of energy, an outward display of an inward feeling that you'd always hoped you'd feel when you signed your union card."

Activists also are buoyed by another win illustrating their collective strength. Last



year, amid contract negotiations with SEIU Local 6, the unionized skycap company Huntleigh bought a nonunion firm, ICTS, doubling in size to about 250 workers. The company encouraged a decertification campaign, say Seattle union leaders, essentially challenging workers to negotiate a contract and organize a new group of colleagues simultaneously. Members of other airport unions pitched in, visiting skycaps at home and at work to talk with them about the importance of union membership. In February, Local 6 beat back the company's speculative venture in union-busting. "We started working on one union's issue and won," says Steve Williamson, executive secretary-treasurer of the King County Labor Council. "That got the spirit going. Then we started looking at what else was on the horizon," says Williamson, referring to thousands of not-yet-unionized workers at the airport. "We realized we could fight about things and then the boss would pick us off, or we could work together," he says.

**Vote: A multiunion campaign resulted in collective bargaining rights for Puerto Rico public employees, including 4,600 in the Education Department who cast their votes for AFSCME and SEIU in December 1999.**

### Puerto Rico

Just three years ago, it was illegal for Puerto Rico's public employees to bargain for the contracts that could improve their lives and communities. Today, more than 90,000 workers are union members with a voice on the job. Through an unprecedented multiunion campaign, workers first convinced the legislature and governor that unions should negotiate and enforce contracts to give workers a real voice on the job. Harnessing the momentum of multiunion cooperation—which has included AFT, Fire Fighters, UAW and UFCW—AFSCME and SEIU activists are continuing to work together on a joint campaign at the commonwealth's Department of Education.

The two unions formed PASO (Personal, Administrativo, Secretarial y de Oficina) in May 1999, bringing together the clerical, administrative and professional workers at the education department. "We coordinated house calls, transportation logistics, member identification and more," says Jose La Luz, director of United Public Employees of Puerto Rico/AFSCME. "We had to set up transportation from the hills, sometimes an hour-and-a-half away, to polling places"

## Four Do's of Multiunion Organizing

- Agree on jurisdictional issues early.
- Combine research, organizing and political resources.
- Build trust gradually.
- Involve rank-and-file members in each others' struggles. @



during the union election, he says. “This fine-tuned the cooperation that already existed.” Today, PASO’s 6,000 members have a strong contract that gives them a voice on the job, health and safety protections and a fair grievance procedure.

La Luz says multiunion campaigns are more effective than solitary efforts because they “generate much more enthusiasm, energy and excitement.” That enthusiasm propelled Puerto Rico’s AFL-CIO-affiliated unions into a successful political campaign to help elect a new governor last year who is committed to expanding workers’ rights, supporting amendments allowing unions to negotiate health benefits and greatly simplifying the union election process. And that’s just a short-term goal for the multiunion coalition. “Then we are committed to expanding to the private sector,” says La Luz. “We need to use this as a model of cooperation and commitment to organizing.”



### California home care workers

When 400 home care workers went to Sacramento this spring to lobby for more state funding to boost wages, lawmakers at the state Senate Budget Committee saw something they had never seen before: a hearing room packed with SEIU purple and UDW/AFSCME green T-shirted workers sitting side by side. It was a calculated tactic to send a message: The once-divided unions were coming together to bring justice to workers who take care of the elderly and the ill. The effort convinced legislators and the governor to add enough funding to raise wages to \$8.50 an hour, substantially more than the minimum wages most were making only a few years ago.

That level of cooperation is evident as the two unions organize and lobby local elected officials as well. UDW/AFSCME home care activists travel to Los Angeles to aid SEIU campaigns there, while SEIU members make home visits in San Diego assisting UDW/AFSCME’s campaign, with everyone wearing white T-shirts emblazoned with both unions’ logos. In February, the California Homecare Council held its first organizing conference, attracting more than 100 activists. “At the conference, we talked about how members felt about the partnership,” says Loretta Stevens, SEIU’s western region coordinator for home care. “They said it was a relief and knew it meant we were utilizing our resources better. They said they knew we’d be stronger together.”



**United: UDW/AFSCME and SEIU members are working together to organize home care workers across California (this page).**

The partnership also aids the council’s county-by-county effort to win fair statutes governing home care worker organizing. For example, some San Diego lawmakers originally wanted to require a 50 percent voter turnout for a union election. UDW/AFSCME leaders showed that no other county had required a similar threshold—as a result of SEIU’s efforts in other parts of the state. The supervisors dropped that demand.

“When SEIU wins a good fight, I know it makes it easier for us,” says Fahari Jeffers, secretary-treasurer of UDW/AFSCME. It also works the other way around, she says. Home care workers soon will be organizing with SEIU in San Bernardino County—like San Diego, not known as an innovator in workers’ rights—and UDW/AFSCME’s win in San Diego will bolster that effort. “I hope this will be a model for other home care campaigns and other industries,” says Jeffers. “We can draw on a whole other body of experience—and blood and sweat and tears. It feels like a real brotherhood and sisterhood.” ☺



# New York, North Carolina

# Make New Alliance a Reality

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

**T**housands of union members in New York City smooth sheets and blankets across the city's hospital beds. Other union members in the area work in restaurants, arranging tablecloths at eateries both fine and humble. But until a few months ago, the workers who washed those linens did not have a union voice on the job. Even after laundry workers won a voice on the job with UNITE and began negotiating their first contract, they still faced stiff employer opposition.

When workers from Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 6 and from several area health care unions pledged not to handle the "dirty" linen if UNITE members went on strike, employers came back to the table and the two sides hammered out a strong master contract in November 2000 that covers 4,000 workers in 40 laundries and includes unprecedented benefits for immigrant workers, such as the right to be addressed in their native language during disciplinary procedures.

Hundreds of miles to the south, union leaders at the North Carolina State AFL-CIO and the Charlotte Labor Council came to the aid of 1,450 striking Steelworkers at Continental Tire in 1999. The state federation mobilized top elected officials to urge the company back to the bargaining table, while the labor council and its allies provided

day-to-day support to USWA Local 850 members. That solidarity helped the workers negotiate their first pay raise in 10 years. "Our members have seen how important it is to have the support of the state federations and labor councils," USWA President Leo Gerard says.

Activists in New York and North Carolina know that to achieve such victories, it takes a strong, unified union movement backing efforts for working families. At separate convocations in June, leaders in both states took an important step toward building that movement by voting to approve New Alliance plans to revitalize state

federations and central labor councils so they can better harmonize unions' organizing, legislative and political strength.

"Organizing with our combined strength is what the New Alliance is about," says UNITE President Bruce Raynor. Limousine driver and Machinists Local Lodge 9 President Syed Armughan agrees. "I am a union member," he says, noting that limo drivers in New York continue to sign up with IAM. "With my union, I have dignity, respect and a voice on the job." But, he adds, "There are 10,000 unorganized limo drivers. We need strength and solidarity in our campaign. That strength comes from the New Alliance."

**N.C. convocation:**  
AFL-CIO Executive  
Vice President Linda  
Chavez-Thompson  
takes part in a North  
Carolina New  
Alliance convocation.



JENNY WARBURG

**IN 1998 AND 1999, AFL-CIO** Executive Council members traveled across the country, listening to union leaders in a variety of forums—from conferences to small-group discussions—exploring what it takes to build an effective union movement. Together, they developed a strategy they named the New Alliance to restructure state federations and central labor councils. The focus is on defining the roles of each union organization, planning and budgeting aimed at meeting specific goals, boosting technology and increasing the participation of unions and members to build a stronger statewide union movement. In 1999, dele-

gates to the AFL-CIO convention approved the initiative. New York and North Carolina became the first states to undertake the challenging task, and drafting committees of union leaders in each state spent more than one year listening to activists and tailoring plans to their areas.

## New York

New York unionists meeting in Manhattan June 5 voted to create five powerhouse Area Labor Federations to coordinate the work of 25 labor councils. Denis Hughes, president of the New York State AFL-CIO, says the remapping will energize the entire state.

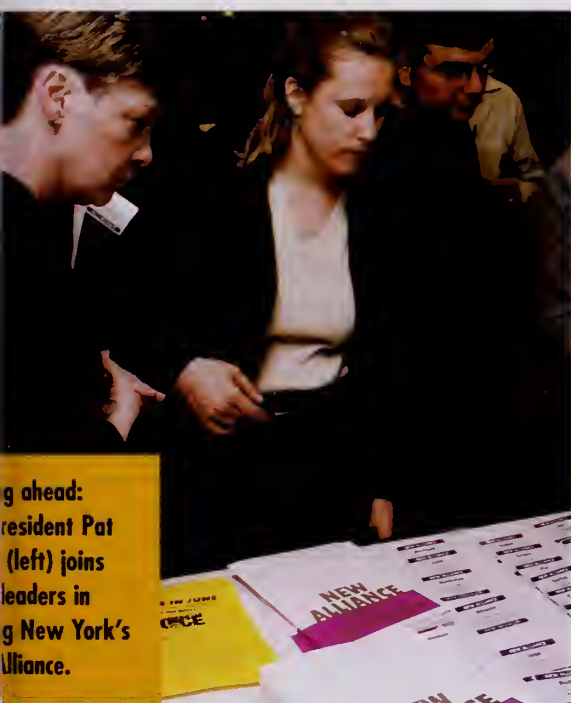


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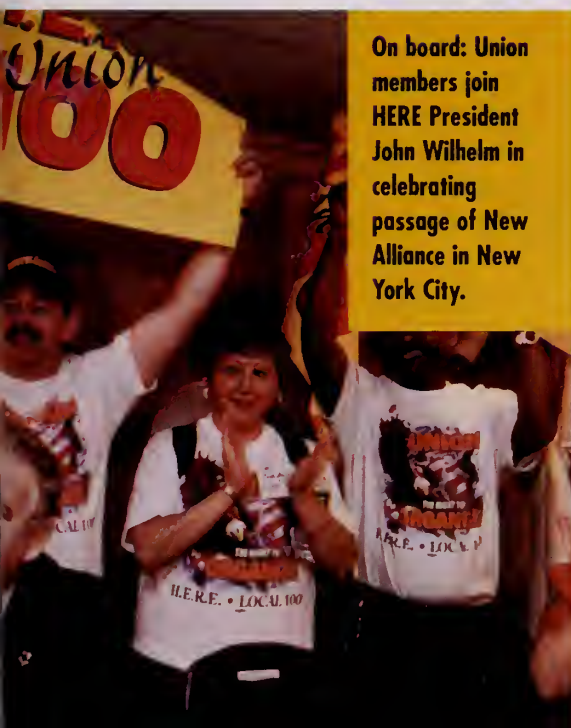




**Moving forward:** USWA President Leo Gerard helps craft the future at the North Carolina New Alliance convocation.



**g ahead:** President Pat (left) joins leaders in g New York's Alliance.



**On board:** Union members join HERE President John Wilhelm in celebrating passage of New Alliance in New York City.

"We want a union presence throughout the state so that there are no pockets where employers can go to deny workers a voice on the job," he says.

"The remapping will double our base for political mobilizing and organizing," says Jim Bertolone, president of the Rochester and Vicinity Labor Council, who will head the Rochester/Genesee Valley Area Labor Federation. "Smaller labor councils will get access to the resources they need to implement our initiatives."

Union activists will better aim political and legislative action at boosting organizing, says New York City Central Labor Council President Brian McLaughlin, and judging candidates not only on their voting records but also on whether they "march with you and stand with you on picket lines" during organizing campaigns.

### North Carolina

North Carolina leaders put their own plans in place June 13 at a convocation in Raleigh. They did not create Area Labor Federations but redrew the boundaries of existing labor councils to better concentrate and focus workers' strength. Like their counterparts in New York, North Carolina union leaders looked at labor council maps created 50 years ago when the economic and political climate in their state was much different. The New Alliance process gave them the opportunity to analyze where union members live, work, organize, worship and vote—and to customize new boundaries with beefed-up labor councils ready and able to mobilize. North Carolinians also voted to create a state chapter of the Alliance for Retired Americans and drew plans to legalize collective bargaining for public employees. Political mobilization will focus on unseating U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms (R) and electing a worker-friendly candidate when the state gets a new congressional seat in 2002 after redistricting.

"We have brought all the unions to the table and crafted a vision," says North Carolina State AFL-CIO President James Andrews. "Now the real work is about to start."

Activists in both states approved changes to leadership structures that will increase diversity, creating seats for representatives of AFL-CIO constituency groups. They also will benefit from increased commitments from internationals to fully affiliate local unions with labor councils and state federations, boosting the size and strength of the union movements there.

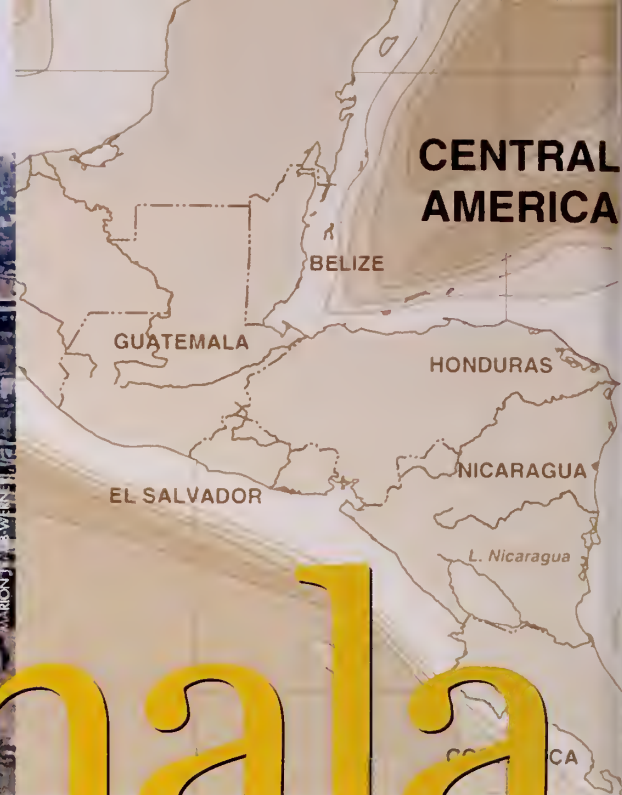
"With the changes in the global economy, anti-union employers and the climate in Congress, no union is strong enough to win all by itself," says Thomas Buffenbarger, chair of the AFL-CIO's state and local advisory committee and president of the IAM. At its last constitutional convention in September, the IAM voted to require local unions to fully affiliate with state federations and central labor councils. "The AFL-CIO should not be an open shop."

Leaders of international unions say they need to know they can count on robust state federations and central labor councils when they launch organizing campaigns. "Our biggest battles with employers take place in our communities," says Flight Attendants President Patricia Friend, referring to AFA efforts to organize at Delta Air Lines and win a strong contract at US Airways. "We need a strong union community to help with these campaigns." Union members from Atlanta to Pittsburgh to Charlotte have stood with flight attendants, says Friend, and "I tell our locals that when someone calls on us for help, we have to be there for them, too."

New Alliance drafting committees made up of local union and labor council leaders now are meeting in Colorado, Maryland and Oregon. The New Alliance "will change the future for America's working families," AFL-CIO President John Sweeney told New York activists, by mobilizing union members to fight for "a better standard of living, a voice at work and in our communities, our government and the global economy and better educations for our children." @



# Global Lessons in Guatemala



Just south of Guatemala City, the shanty town of Alioto sprawls for miles, thousands of tin and wood shacks tumbling over each other and stretching up the side of the hill across dusty, treeless land. Eight years ago, this *asentamiento* (squatter settlement) did not exist, but now is crowded with more than 55,000 people who have come from rural areas in search of work. Many, like Gloria, are employed in one of the nearby *maquila* plants.

Past rows of indistinguishable corrugated metal and cement walls and behind an eight-foot cinder block fence topped with strings of barbed wire, Gloria's daughter Marisol, 25, lives with her uncle and two children in a one-room shack her mother helped build. A freestanding cabinet acts as a partition between the kitchen and the corner of the room with bunk beds. A single electric bulb dangles above the table, but as in the rest of Alioto, there is no running water—except during the four-month rainy season, when the house regularly is flooded.

Sitting at a table festively decorated even in May with Christmas-themed Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck cartoon characters, Gloria (who requested only her first name be used) describes her 11-hour days at a Korean-owned textile factory, where she sews clothes that ultimately bear the Liz Claiborne label.

"Work hours are supposed to be from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., but normally, we don't get out until 7 p.m.," she says. "When we say we work extra hours, they say, 'no, it's voluntary,' but it's really obligatory, because if we don't work, they don't give us our cards back." Without the cards, akin to time sheets, workers would be docked the entire day's pay.

Gloria, who shares her own nearby one-room shack with her four youngest children, is allowed only one bathroom break during the entire workday—and frequently finds her paycheck does not include overtime or bonus pay for exceeding work quotas. Making the equivalent of \$78 every two weeks for a workweek that includes Saturdays, the family lives on beans and eggs and scrimps on water, which they purchase by the barrel at roughly \$1.50 per day—more than one-fourth of Gloria's wages.

But Gloria is among a handful of women in Guatemala's booming textile industry taking part in a daring experiment—organizing a union.

"I would want to get a raise, or at least get paid what we're owed," Gloria says, describing her goals for a union organizing campaign that, if successful, would make her factory the only unionized textile plant in Guatemala. Nearly 90,000 workers, most of them women, are employed in maquilas, more than half of which are Korean-owned.

The only other union campaign at an apparel-export factory,

Phillips Van Heusen, was crushed after workers won a contract and the plant closed in 1998.

Working among the 1,000 workers at the plant, Gloria is developing union contacts and support that ultimately will enable the workers to go public with the campaign. Her efforts—and those of two organizers

for FESTRAS, the federation overseeing the maquila organizing project—are receiving assistance from the AFL-CIO Solidarity Center and STITCH. A network of U.S. women, funded in part by the Diane Middleton Foundation, STITCH backs women's organizing for fair wages and dignity on the job in Central America. As part of that support, 11 women—ranging from age 20 through their fifties—traveled as part of a nine-day STITCH

By  
Tula Connell

Squatters settlement: In the past eight years, 55,000 people have set up homes just outside Guatemala City.



delegation to Guatemala in May, where they talked with maquila workers like Gloria, studied Spanish and met with a range of union leaders, human rights experts and migrant support groups.

Among the participants, who came from union, community, student and human rights organizations across the United States, AFSCME Local 35 member Judy Lowe, 48, says she was able to sign up with the delegation because of the South Central Iowa Federation of Labor. The Des Moines-based labor council funded her travel as part of its outreach among community groups and its work in an anti-sweatshop coalition with the American Friends Committee.

Nina Lessin-Joseph, 20, a student at the University of Massachusetts who comes from a union family—her mother works at the Massachusetts AFL-CIO and her father is a member of the state affiliate of the National Education Association—joined the group because of its direct relevance to her participation in the union movement through anti-sweatshop efforts and as an intern with the Steelworkers. The trip also bolsters her Latin American Studies major and her interest in developing leadership among union women.

Seeking to build expertise in Central America and to expand her study of women's issues, Laura Moye, 25, a southern regional representative for the human rights organization Amnesty International, took part in the delegation because, she says, it's necessary for human rights groups to expand their focus to include broader socioeconomic concerns: "Human rights are labor rights," says Atlanta-based Moye.

\* \* \* \*

As dusk falls, the smell of smoke from open fire pits drifts across Alioto. Sitting with the STITCH delegation, Gloria explains how she had been disciplined that week for speaking up to her supervisor. "The supervisor wanted to make an example of me—I only stayed until 6 p.m., not 7." Suspended without pay for five days—after the supervisor told her she was 'an animal with no brain' and locked her in an office for hours—Gloria was followed when she left the plant. Terrified, she hid in a store until her follower went away.

It's then that Marisol, who has hovered protectively over her mother throughout the interview, bringing her water to ease the coughing fits brought on from constant exposure to fine fabric particles, breaks into tears.

"She has all of our support, but we're very afraid," Marisol says between sobs. "We support her, but we only have one mother."

### History of fear

Marisol's fear of unions, shared by hundreds of thousands of workers across the nation, is grounded in the country's bloody, 36-year civil war, in which more than 200,000 Guatemalans were killed, including hundreds of union leaders and members, almost all by paramilitary forces, according to an international commission charged with investigating the atrocities.

Between 1944 and 1954, Guatemalans had lived under a new constitution and labor codes that gave them collective bargaining rights, required employers to withhold union dues from paychecks and required equal pay



**New friends:** AFSCME Local 35 member Judy Lowe celebrates her birthday with three children in Antigua, Guatemala.

for men and women in the public and private sectors. After a 1954 coup that launched years of bloody dictatorships, the government immediately outlawed union organizing, cut wages by as much as 50 percent and made it illegal for unions to participate in politics. In one year, union membership dropped from 100,000 to 27,000, with some trade unionists murdered.

By the 1970s, Deborah Levenson-Estrada, author of the book *Trade Unionists Against Terror*, says the horror had reached the point where the new military president declared if it was necessary to turn the entire country into a "cemetery in order to pacify it," he would not hesitate to do so. Some trade unionists fought on, but by then, the banners they carried in the rare demonstration had only one demand: "For the Right to Live."

### Government interference

The signing of the 1996 Peace Accords, ending the armed conflict by the government and opposition forces, brought new hope to union leaders—yet since then, groups have become more passive and the government is trying to weaken or eliminate unions, which represent only 2 percent of the workforce, says Homer Fuentes, coordinator of a Danish trade union-funded project to organize maquilas in Guatemala.

In addition to recent massive privatization of government services, Fuentes cites more direct government interference: "Sometimes



**Group action:** Women from a broad spectrum of union, community and human rights organizations took part in the 2001 STITCH delegation to Guatemala, including Katie Eident, Joanne Orosz, Janine Easter and Nina Lessin-Joseph.



Gulf of Tehuantepec

BELIZE

GUATEMALA

HONDURAS

they provoke unions to take action, then legally fire workers and the union disappears." The government also offers money to union leaders, already desperately poor, to leave their unions, says Fuentes, speaking to the STITCH delegation at a meeting over dinner in Guatemala City. Outside the restaurant, one of the nation's ubiquitous camouflage-attired guards—holding a semi-automatic weapon—casually paces in front of the window.

### Creating an organizing culture

Even while under attack by a hostile government, unions also face another challenge: Changing their structure to adapt to organizing. Historically, unions in Guatemala have relied on workers coming to them for help in joining a union. When they do, union leaders repeat the nation's labor law requirement: Sign up 25 people (no matter the size of the worksite) who want to join a union, then register with the government, says Marion Traub-Werner, STITCH's staff person in Central America and delegation coordinator.

"The next day, they hold a rally," says Bob Perillo, a Guatemala-based representative of the U.S./Labor Education in the Americas Project. "Management identifies them and fires them—and the union won't be able to organize for another 10 years."

The basic components of a U.S. organizing campaign—making home visits, keeping lists of addresses and evaluating the level of workers' interest in supporting a union—all are tactics Guatemala unions still must learn.

Through the help of STITCH, the Danish maquila project and the Solidarity Center, FESTRAS recently has become the only federation in the country to train paid organizers. The move was especially significant for FESTRAS because it also marked the first time the federation—which represents an almost entirely male membership—reached out to a primarily female workforce.

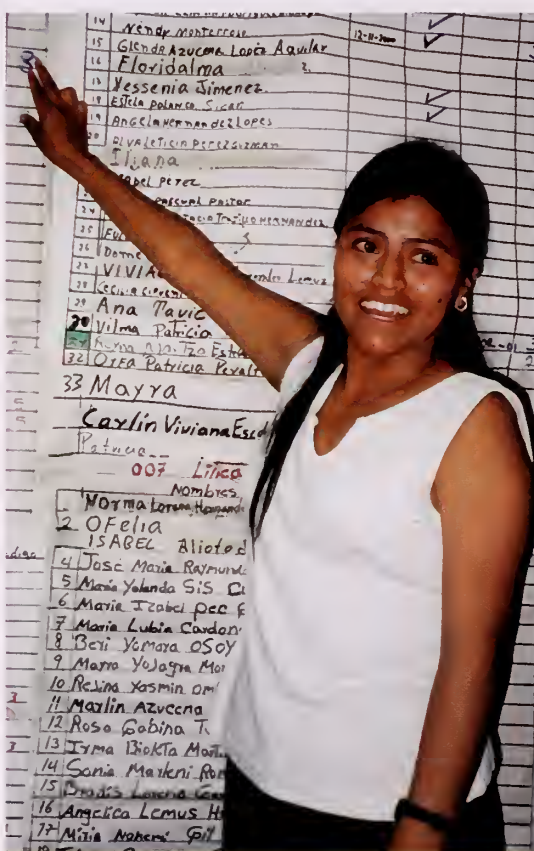
"The majority of people who work in maquilas, they live in subhuman conditions," says FESTRAS board member Manuel Zetino. "Workers have very little

formal education and don't know what their rights are. For us, it's an important new project to have this organizing team."

Organizing women also means hiring women organizers—an unheard-of role for a woman in a country where, until maquilas began flourishing 10 years ago, women rarely worked in the formal sector.

Marie Mejia, one of two FESTRAS organizers, says her family opposed her decision to become a maquila organizer. Now, she faces another obstacle: "Being in FESTRAS, it is a challenge to show even though I'm a woman, I can do the job."

A former maquila worker, Mejia endures a grueling two-hour bus ride to Villa Nueva, the area that encompasses Alioto, and often must visit workers at night—dangerous even when accompanied by a male organizer because of the high crime rate.



**Breaking barriers:** As a union organizer, Marie Mejia says one of the biggest obstacles she faces is to show that "even though I'm a woman, I can do the job."

Once at the women's homes, she must request permission of the husband to speak to his wife. "If the husband refuses, I ask the woman separately if I can talk with her. Sometimes she says 'yes,' sometimes, 'no.'"

### The globalization of maquilas

A few miles from Alioto, inside the sleek glass and concrete office building of Guatemala's export trade association Agex-pront, representatives of the textile industry have prepared a slick, 20-minute PowerPoint presentation. Images of clean, well-lit factories and healthy workers are accompanied by English text that describes the main objective of its 250 members: to become the center of operations for the apparel and textile industry in the region by 2005.

That goal would get a big boost with passage in the U.S. Congress of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, now being crafted by corporate chieftains throughout the Western Hemisphere. The President Bush-backed extension of the North American Free Trade Agreement would cover 34 countries in North, Central and South America. With FTAA in place, Guatemala and all of Central America increasingly would become magnets for foreign-owned companies that seek to maximize profits through the FTAA's reduced tariffs, says Steve Coats, U.S./LEAP director.

FTAA is another component in the global corporate effort to transfer work to countries where labor and human rights regularly are violated—and the reason U.S. workers are pushing the U.S. Congress, World Trade Organization, World Bank and International Monetary Fund to make those rights part of enforceable international trade rules. To ensure workers are aware of their rights—including the right to collective bargaining—unions worldwide launched a campaign in May to distribute a poster bearing the International Labor Organization's "Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work." (To download a copy of the poster and a screen saver, go to [www.aflcio.org/iloposter/iloscreensaver](http://www.aflcio.org/iloposter/iloscreensaver).)



At the same time, lending policies of such entities as the World Bank require countries to enact brutal fiscal restraints to qualify for funds—policies that disproportionately affect the poor. In Guatemala, the World Bank is “one of the principal actors in the development of fiscal policy in the country,” says Mario Jorge Salazar, a researcher at the Investigative Counsel for Central American Development. Guatemala’s proposed 2 percentage point sales tax increase—from 10 percent to 12 percent—is “supported by the World Bank,” Salazar says. While the bank pushes taxes onto the consumer, he says, it “discourages any collection of tariffs or taxation on production.”

Calling for debt relief and fighting for trade policies that don’t exploit workers, global activists now are focusing on the FTAA, which as structured would compound obstacles women face seeking to support their families. Under NAFTA, export processing zones have employed large numbers of young women—between the ages of 16 and 25—who earn 20 percent to 30 percent less than men. Women like those who work alongside Gloria.

“The STITCH delegation visited women in the early stage of organizing a union,” says Traub-Werner. “The workers we visited felt encouraged by our visit—it was proof that they are not alone. We hope that participants return to their unions and organizations and spread the word about women workers’ lives and struggles in Central America.”

### Making it happen at home

For the activists who took part in the STITCH delegation, taking action is the natural follow-up to an intense nine days of listening, observing and learning. Throughout the trip—which began in Guatemala City and extended to the Spanish colonial capital of Antigua, the high mountain city of Quezaltenango and the sweltering border town Tecun Uman—group members repeatedly asked how U.S. women leaders could help. They wanted to know whether their actions to boycott labels, urge corporate

PAMELA VOSSENAS



**A long struggle: Textile workers rally outside a Phillips Van Heusen plant in 1997.**

responsibility for companies contracting with maquilas and educate consumers made any difference.

Several participants were surprised when Guatemalan union leaders and others said it did.

### Get Involved

- Make a contribution to STITCH or find out what else you can do to support women organizing in Central America by contacting STITCH, 4933 S. Dorchester, Chicago, Ill. 60615; phone: 773-924-2738; e-mail: hf52@aol.com; or online at [www.stitchonline.org](http://www.stitchonline.org).
- Take part in rallies, workshops, teach-ins and other events Sept. 26–Oct. 1, planned to coincide with the meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in Washington, D.C. Visit [www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy](http://www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy).
- Find out how you can educate your union and workplace by learning more about the AFL-CIO’s Women in the Global Economy program at 202-639-6263.
- Download and distribute education fliers on the effects of the global economy on women available at [www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy](http://www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy). @

“You kind of feel like you’re isolated and think, ‘What good are you really doing?’ thousands of miles away, as a group of 20 people standing in front of a store, saying, ‘Don’t buy this brand of clothing,’” says Lowe. “You feel it doesn’t make a difference—and what we’re hearing is that, at least in a small way, it does.”

For Moye, “It’s so important to meet people who are experiencing these violations, so we can see how to be helpful and not just treat them as charity.”

Even before she had her plane ticket, Lowe had lined up 20 groups—including her church, human rights organizations and union-related committees—where she planned to make presentations based on her trip. Moye says she foresees leading workshops, as Amnesty’s southern region expands its expertise in Central America.

A college sophomore, Lessin-Joseph says she “has an obligation to learn more.” She plans to build on her experiences in Guatemala, which reinforced her awareness that “what workers are facing in the U.S. is directly related to what workers are facing in Central America.”

“I was totally shocked by their demands—workers just want what they’re supposed to get,” says Lessin-Joseph. “A year ago if I had come here, I’d be so sad. Now I’m mad. How often can you cry? It’s more effective to be angry about a situation and do something about it.” @



# Mobilizing Members



## for Year-Round Political Action

**GOTV:** In Los Angeles, union leaders and members get out the vote in the city's spring primaries.

**A**fter 30 years of political activism, Dennis Gionet, a Sheet Metal Workers Local 17 member and New Hampshire chairman of the large New England local, is convinced that unions must maximize their electoral muscle by

acting politically all the time, not letting invaluable relationships lie fallow after a big state or federal election effort.

"You have to keep going all year round, you can't let your guard down any time," he says. "You have to constantly stay in touch with all your elected officials, including the most local."

In May, the AFL-CIO Executive Council affirmed its commitment to year-round political activity by approving a worksite political and legislative mobilization strategy for working families. "Labor was a force to be reckoned with last November, and one major reason was the commitment from our members on the ground to elect pro-labor





**Ground:** AFSCME President Gerold McEntee, who heads the Executive Council's Political Committee, says union members are building on their Labor 2000 campaign efforts.

By Jane Birnbaum

candidates and fight for issues important to working families," says AFSCME President Gerald McEntee, chairman of the council's political committee.

In the 2000 elections, union household members turned out in greater numbers and represented more of the voter turnout than in recent history, according to the nonparti-

san Voter News Service. Specifically, union household members accounted for 26 percent as a percentage of the total electorate in 2000, up from 23 percent in 1996 and 19 percent in 1992.

This turnout paved the way for a 50-50 split between Democrats and Republicans in the Senate—and the return in May to a Democratic Senate. "The commitment hasn't stopped," McEntee says. "Union members went from campaigning in November elections to working on campaigns and initiatives on the local and state levels and preparing for future national campaigns."

### Building a rapid response

This spring, Gionet, a Labor 2000 coordinator, helped working families deliver a stunning 240-82 state house rebuke to a New Hampshire "right to work" bill—approximately 100 Republicans voted "no," and no Democrat voted "yes." Earlier, members of the state House Labor Committee—half of whom are former or active union members—issued a 16-1 advisory vote against the proposal.

The roots of New Hampshire's victory against so-called right to work legislation—promoted by radical conservative strategist Grover Norquist and the Virginia-based National Right to Work Committee—lay in the statewide activist infrastructure and the "early warning system" the federation spearheaded last year.

At worksites and union meetings, union leaders gave members preprinted postcards that drove the campaign. Union members mailed the postcards—which included their names and telephone numbers—to their state representatives, many of whom called the members in response. "They were amazed that the state reps actually listened," says New Hampshire AFL-CIO President Mark MacKenzie. "This was a tremendous victory for New Hampshire's working families, who now understand their power in the political process."

Building such a rapid response network in the workplace is one step in the AFL-CIO 10-Point Program for Political Activity, developed by the federation and affiliates through grassroots political experience in recent elections (see Toolbox, page 21).

New Hampshire unions crafted the successful campaign on a bedrock of registered union voters. More and more unions are recognizing voter registration as the starting

point for effective political action, as they aim to increase the proportion of union members registered to vote by 10 percent.

In New Jersey, state AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Laurel Brennan says after she and federation President Charles Wowkanech were elected in 1997, working families had just lost the governor's race by 25,000 votes—the closest gubernatorial race in state history.

"Unions had worked very hard to turn out our vote, but not all our voters had been registered," she says. "We took a hard look at the numbers and realized that all the donations, rallies and leaflets were worthless if our members weren't registered."

Today, registration among New Jersey members is up because of activists like Sue Michielli, business agent for United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1360 in West Berlin. Michielli walks supermarket floors and chats with members at break time, asking everyone to fill out a voter registration form even if they think they already are registered. And because register-



**Steeled for victory:** Dennis Gionet, SMWIA Local 17 member and 30-year activist, says it's critical for unions to engage in political action year-round.

ing to vote in New Jersey does not require picking a political party, she has succeeded in getting a grocery chain to agree to attach voter registration forms to paychecks.

But registration alone isn't enough. Every election day in November, the Southern New Jersey Central Labor Council coordinates huge get-out-the-vote efforts highlighted by morning rallies. "All our efforts come down to the fact people need to pull a



lever to get our union candidates elected," says Donald Norcross, council president. This year, New Jersey union campaign forces are focusing on more than a dozen races, including the electoral campaign of Steve Sweeney, an Iron Workers Local 399 business representative vying for a state senate seat.

### Running for office

Electrical Workers Local 134 in Cook County (Chicago) also has worked to raise voter registration rates—up from 48 percent in the mid-1990s to 85 percent today. What's more, approximately 30 IBEW Local 134 members now hold local elected offices. One such lawmaker, Wilfred Brennan, is a full-time teacher in Local 134's training program. In April, he was elected village trustee, the equivalent of city councilman, in his hometown village of Brookfield, Ill., which includes 1,750 union members. Almost 40 percent of union members—a high turnout for a local election, Brennan says—helped him defeat a 20-year incumbent by roughly 800 votes.

Once in office, Brennan made sure a union shop printed the trustees' new business cards. But that's just for starters. According to IBEW Local 134 President Ed Buettner, it's activist-officials such as Brennan who eventually will make sure municipalities enforce the federal Davis-Bacon Act, which requires government contractors to pay local prevailing wages and benefits to construction workers.

Central to the AFL-CIO program to elect union members to public office is union member-legislators' opportunity to advance and protect interests of working families' unions. In New Hampshire, Ed Mears, a member of PACE International Union Local 75 and five-term ranking Democrat on the House Labor Committee, actively worked to defeat the proposed "right to work" legislation. Mears explained the details of the bill to freshman Republicans and helped them understand the need to vote against it.

"Once they start, the new members get disenchanted," he explains. "They see the power struggles and all the little things they weren't aware of, like the muscle of the committee chairs and the whips. So what you do is listen and say you



COURTESY SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

**Working family concerns: New Jersey unions are building on the momentum created in Labor 2000 to mobilize members around issues.**

understand—all you're doing is reaching out to them. Even if you're from another party, it's just a person treating someone else like a person."

In New Jersey, Freeholder (county commissioner) Steve Sweeney is in his second term in Gloucester County and is running for the 3rd District's state senate seat. Through the efforts of Sweeney—who learned the importance of keeping speeches short when he went through the New Jersey federation's member-candidate school—Gloucester in 1998 became the first county in the nation to pass a no-sweatshop procurement resolution.

### Educating members on the issues

Joe Dugan, political director of UFCW Local 56, which includes nearly 13,000 members in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware, who are primarily meat cutters and deli workers, finds mobilizing members around issues to be an effective strategy. Many, especially workers who bone fish, take the ergonomics issue—protections against injury caused by repetitive motions on the job—very personally. "If you have wrists that don't bend, you understand how important an issue such as ergo is to your ability to work and support your family," Dugan says. Congress's repeal of a hard-won federal ergonomics rule earlier this year was "the disappointment of a lifetime," according to Dugan, especially since Local 56 members had sent letters, many handwritten, about this issue to legislators.

In approving year-round political activity, the AFL-CIO's Executive Council recognized the connection between issue mobilization and candidate elections.

The federation has asked affiliate unions to continue assigning local coordinators, as they did in Labor 2000 electoral campaigns, who will be responsible for getting information to members about issues that matter to working families. To assist them, the AFL-CIO website offers a toolkit ([www.aflcio.org/workingfamiliestoolkit](http://www.aflcio.org/workingfamiliestoolkit)) with downloadable fliers in English and Spanish on topics that include workplace safety, Medicare prescription drugs and fair trade, with new topics available each month.

In Los Angeles, Letter Carriers Branch 24 hammers home the message on such issues as privatization of government services and collective bargaining rights. Members receive scripts about the issues they can refer to when calling their congressional representatives, and pre-printed issue letters to send them. "We constantly remind our members they'd better get involved in these issues to protect their jobs and families," says Branch 24 President Lawrence Brown Jr., a national NALC trustee and Los Angeles County Federation of Labor vice president.

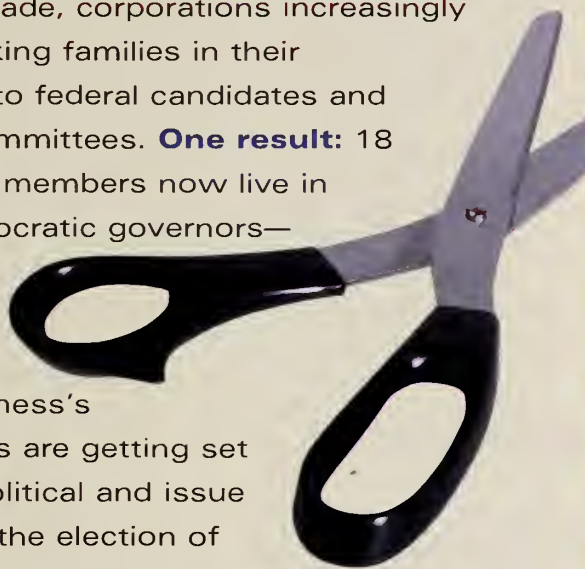
In New Jersey, UFCW Local 1360's bimonthly newspaper always runs a column on political events and issues. In Illinois, Buettner sends IBEW Local 134's get-out-the-vote message through the local's newsletter, at the union meeting and in the political report mailed to all members' homes. The report is "almost a repeat of the newsletter," Buettner explains, "but not everybody reads the newsletter, and not everybody comes to the meeting." In fact, communicating with members is a key part of the 10-point program, which stresses making the most of member contact through union publications and maximizing communication from local presidents and business agents.

Year-round, Buettner talks politics to apprentices in class. "If you don't get them at 19 and 20, you won't have them at 30 and 40," he explains. "The younger members today will register to vote, but they do not want to be told who or what to vote for—they want to know the issues. And when you tell them, and what it means to them and their families, they usually vote for the issues that will make a positive difference for working families." @



## Combating Corporate Contributions with People Power

In the past decade, corporations increasingly outspent working families in their contributions to federal candidates and political party committees. **One result:** 18 percent of union members now live in states with Democratic governors—down from 71 percent in the early 1990s. To counter Big Business's big bucks, unions are getting set for year-round political and issue action, ensuring the election of candidates who support the concerns of working families. The AFL-CIO's 10-Point Program for Political Activists helps provide a step-by-step map for success.



## Money Madness

Every election cycle, corporate spending on federal candidates and political party committees jumps further and further ahead of working families' contributions



Corporations outspent unions  
**9 to 1**



Corporations outspent unions  
**11 to 1**

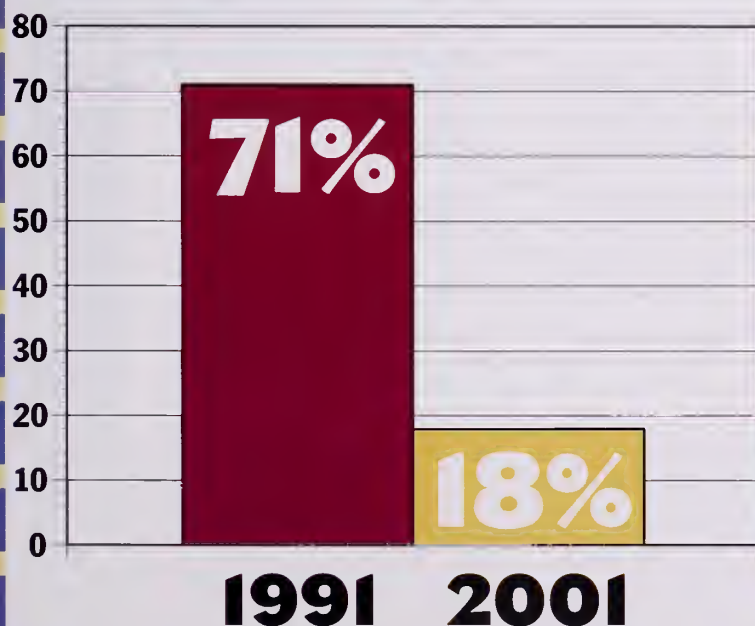


Corporations outspent unions  
**14 to 1**

Source: Center for Responsive Politics

## Sea Change

Percentage of union members living in states with Democratic governors



Source: AFL-CIO analysis

## 10-Point Program for Political Activists

Defeating Big Business's big bucks in elections means mobilizing union members

1. Recruit a key contact at each local union and worksite.
2. Distribute leaflets at all union worksites.
3. Maximize contact through union publications.
4. Maximize communication from local presidents and business agents.
5. Maximize impact of union phone calls.
6. Update locals' membership lists.
7. Increase registration by 10 percent.
8. Direct a get-out-the-vote campaign.
9. Build a rapid response network in the workplace.
10. Link politics to organizing.



## Charlie Brown to Anti-Union Hotel: Rats!

**W**hen a Holiday Inn in downtown St. Paul, Minn., closed for renovations in 1997, the owner promised 30 Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 17 members—housekeepers, laundry and front desk workers—their jobs would be waiting when the hotel reopened. But in the meantime, a new owner bought a 51 percent interest in the hotel. Not only did he declare it nonunion, none of the workers who reapplied for their jobs this year was hired. During *7 Days in June*—the AFL-CIO's week of actions designed to shine a spotlight on the obstacles workers face when they try to organize for a voice at work—a coalition of activists led a march to the hotel.

There, they saw big bucks had been spent on a life-size fiberglass statue of the "Peanuts" comic strip character Charlie Brown.

Inspired, one union marcher stuck two "Stop Union Busting" signs in Chuck's hands—

a move that even might have passed muster with "Peanuts" creator Charles Schulz, who in 1968 drew a cartoon in support of a San Francisco newspaper strike.

"We're not going to walk away from this fight," says HERE Local 17 organizer Kyle Makarios. "Even Charlie Brown won't support a company that won't pay Peanuts." ☐



DIANE O'BRIEN

## Bottom's Up

**A**t Walt Disney World in Orlando, Fla., the 1,200 Teamsters Local 385 members who portray Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and other famous cartoon characters won an "undercover" victory in recent contract negotiations. The union members who don the heavy outfits and

entertain park guests must wear tights or bike shorts beneath their costumes. They've long shared these undergarments, which management said were washed in hot water after each wearing.

Still, some members weren't comfortable leaving the cleaning to the company.

"They'd rather do it themselves, even if it means a slightly bigger laundry load," says Donna-

Lynne Dalton, Local 385 business agent, who is pleased that among contract improvements for the performers, Disney has agreed to assign Pluto, Minnie Mouse and the rest of the gang their own bike shorts and tights they may wash themselves. ☐



WALT DISNEY WORLD RESORT

## UNION LEADERS HELD 'CAPTIVE'

**W**hen the Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor invited union stewards and officers to what turned out to be a mock captive audience meeting during *7 Days in June*, everything was carefully planned, down to the Painters and Allied Trades Local 6 agreeing to leave the union bug off the "Union Free" stickers that "supervisors"—Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 10 interns—slapped on them.

Angered by a "Cleveland Electronics" plant supervisor—actually HERE Local 10 President Ken Ilg—describing unionists as outsiders and thugs, one delegate tried to leave, but federation Secretary-Treasurer John Ryan intercepted him. Ryan says when he told the delegate it was a mock

meeting, "he let out a sigh of relief."

The re-enactment graphically depicted for union leaders the experience of workers seeking a voice at work: 91 percent of employers faced with organizing campaigns force workers to attend closed-door anti-union meetings, according to Cornell University Prof. Kate Bronfenbrenner.

Ryan says the role-playing was designed to encourage union leaders—many of whom like himself had never been in a genuine captive meeting—to call the federation early on in organizing campaigns so it can mobilize invaluable community support on their behalf. "A brother from Cleveland AFTRA said the actors were so good, they should be paying AFTRA dues," says Ryan. ☐

## Dressed for Success

**W**hen management of Alfa Laval/Tri Clover in Kenosha, Wis., brought 192 demands to the bargaining table the first day of contract talks with Office and Professional Employees Local 35 and later locked out the almost all-female workforce, the women suspected more than bad faith bargaining: The same managers had just completed negotiations with the mostly male Machinists Lodge 34, making no major demands and agreeing to wage and pension increases.

After more than a month of talks with the company, which makes valves and pumps for the dairy and restaurant industries, Local 35 decided to draw attention to what appeared to be a clear gender bias.

"We originally wanted to burn our bras, but we couldn't get a burning permit," jokes Local 35 Business Manager Judy Burnick. "So we figured we'd dress like men and turn in our bras for hardhats and then we'd get a fair contract." The local union sent out press releases to local and national media to publicize the event.

On June 6, the entire bargaining committee showed up for contract talks dressed in men's clothing. At the same time, the media were calling the company for comment. Faced with the prospect of public exposure, the company settled within three hours, Burnick says.

"We know what they were going through," says Bill Holland, IAM Lodge 34 business representative, "and we were behind them 100 percent." ☐



NICK PATRINOS

**A macho move:** Local 35 donned men's clothing to win a contract settlement.



## PUBLICATIONS

**American workers'** pension funds account for \$7 trillion of U.S. capital markets—and harnessing the power of those investments to provide secure retirements for beneficiaries and long-term, positive investment strategies should be the goal of unions, according to *Working Capital: The Power of Labor's Pensions*, edited by Archon Fung, Tessa Hebb and Joel Rogers. Steelworkers President Leo Gerard wrote the book's foreword, and the 11 contributing authors provide the analysis and strategies for success in navigating the inefficiencies and negative consequences of contemporary market investments. \$35. Cornell University Press, available at bookstores and online at [www.cornellpress.cornell.edu](http://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu).

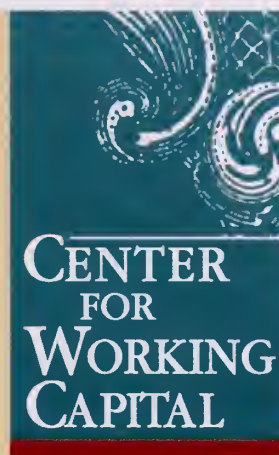
**2001 Kids Count Data Book: State Profiles of Child Well-Being**, produced by Kids Count, a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, details the progress and prospects of America's children and youths through a state-by-state analysis of 10 key indicators helpful to those lobbying for improvements in children's well-being. While the statistical

portrait of the nation's children found improvements in seven of 10 areas, based on data from 1990–2000, the *Data Book* finds

increases in the rate of low-weight births, the share of children living in single-parent families and the number of children who live in poverty although their parents work year-round. For copies, call 410-223-2890 or write to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Attn.: Kids



The Center for Working Capital's 4th annual Funds@Work Conference, Oct. 5–6, 2001, in San Francisco, will focus on challenges union pension trustees face in meeting the needs of plan participants and providing innovative strategies related to benefits, plan administration and investments. The conference, designed for investment and fund professionals, trustees and staff, also will examine the latest developments in trustee activism and new thinking on how to enhance fund value through active ownership. For more information or registration materials, call Diane Hedlund at the Center for Working Capital at 202-637-5179 or e-mail [dhedlund@aflcio.org](mailto:dhedlund@aflcio.org).



**Count Data Book**, 701 St. Paul St., Baltimore, Md. 21202. The entire *Data Book* is available online in PDF format at [www.kidscount.org](http://www.kidscount.org).

## MUSIC



**"Workers Rise: Labor in the Spotlight,"** a new CD by the New York City Labor Chorus, is a fitting tribute to celebrate the Chorus's 10th anniversary. It features 20 songs that mirror the diversity and strength of the 75-member ensemble, who represent more than two dozen unions. Labor favorites include a lively "Rockin' Solidarity" and "Workers Rise." The album is dedicated to chorus member Percy McRae, a retired Letter Carrier who died suddenly in July 2000 after singing the national anthem at a Chicago Cubs home game at Wrigley Field. McRae is the soloist on "Ballad for Americans." \$15 for a CD

and \$10 for a cassette, plus \$3 for shipping. Order from the New York City Labor Chorus, c/o Fund for Labor Education, Suite 206, 2109 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023, or call 212-595-6600.

## VIDEOS

**Two half-hour** documentaries on 2001 counterinaugural activities are available on a single VHS tape from [www.VoterMarch.org](http://www.VoterMarch.org). "Raining on the Parade: Inauguration 2001," an independent video by Deep Dish TV, has original footage from various groups at the counterinaugural activities and commentary from members of Congress and the National Press Club. "Not My President: Voices from the Counter-Coup J20 2001," by the Independent Media Center, features action coverage of Voter March, the Shadow Inauguration and other actions. The combined video is available for \$20 (covers shipping and handling). Send a check to Voter March LLC, P.O. Box 731, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10163-0731, or visit the website at [www.VoterMarch.org](http://www.VoterMarch.org) and click on the "Video Tape Orders" button.

## WEBSIGHTING

**[www.RejectTheRebate.com](http://www.RejectTheRebate.com)**—Protest President George W. Bush's tax giveaway to the rich by clicking on the United for a Fair Economy website, signing the online petition and agreeing to redirect your tax rebate. Options suggested for donating all or part of your rebate check include sending it to the Fund for Tax Fairness, which supports organizations working to create a more equitable, progressive tax system. Another option: Click on the icon saying, "I am one of the 26 percent of taxpayers who will not receive" a rebate check.

**Work and Family Bargaining Fact Sheets**—Updated 2001 Work and Family Bargaining Fact Sheets, newly revised by the AFL-CIO Working Women's Department and the Labor Project for Working Families, cover child care, early childhood education, elder care and family leave. Available at [www.aflcio.org/women/issues.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/women/issues.htm), where a bargaining survey also can be downloaded. To order printed copies, contact the Working Women's Department at 888-971-9797.





# Fast Track is the Wrong Track

President George W. Bush and giant corporations want a special Fast Track bill so they can steamroll trade agreements through Congress with no changes and little debate.

This Fast Track bill is worse than the bills Congress rejected in 1997 and 1998.

## A Fast Track deal would:

- Move more American jobs overseas
- Eliminate Congress's ability to review and improve trade deals
- Give too much power to the president
- Allow devastating air and water pollution
- Include no protections for workers' rights and the environment in future trade pacts

## Act Now

**Act now!** Congress is expected to vote soon on Fast Track. Call your members of Congress today at 800-393-1082 and tell them working families need fair and balanced trade that protects people and the environment—NOT Fast Track.

When it comes to trade,  
Congress should do it **RIGHT**, not **FAST**.

For more information and to download and customize fliers for your worksite leafleting, at rallies or other events, visit [www.aflcio.org/stopfasttrack](http://www.aflcio.org/stopfasttrack).

## Get Set for a Week of Global Justice!

Sept. 26–Oct. 1

**They're back....** Leaders of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are planning another closed-door meeting this fall in Washington, D.C.

Outside, thousands of union members and religious, environmental and student activists will demand a global economy that works for all people, not just giant corporations.

Join with activists from around the world for six days of rallies, teach-ins and street action to send a message for global justice.

For more information, click on [www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy](http://www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy).



# America @work

If employers were kids coming home from school with report cards, their parents wouldn't be very happy. Workers report a high level of discontent with employers and corporations, with many saying their rights on the job are not being protected adequately.

ACROSS THE BOARD,

WORKERS SUPPORT

THE FREEDOM

TO CHOOSE

A UNION.

# RIGHTS on the JOB?

"It's a shame that in 2001 we still have people who see your race before they see how good a worker you are."

TEACHER, 52,  
PENNSYLVANIA

*What workers say...*

**ALSO INSIDE:**

**Taking Stock • Class Strategies • A Week for Global Justice**



**"I AM OPPOSED** [to Fast Track] because it forces working people all over the world to compete on terms that completely favor capital. It drives down wages and benefits and undermines efforts to protect the global environment. I am also especially concerned about the millions of women who work around the globe who not only suffer from lower wages, but are subject to frequent sexual abuse and harassment."—*Dr. Lorraine Cohen, AFT member and professor of sociology, City University of New York*

## SAY WHAT?

### How will your union participate in the Global Week of Justice?

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's Say What? Selected responses will appear in a future issue. America@work, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; phone: 202-637-5010; fax: 202-508-6908; e-mail: [atwork@afcio.org](mailto:atwork@afcio.org).

## HERE'S WHAT YOU SAY

### ABOUT THE POSITIVE OUTCOMES THAT HAVE RESULTED FROM YOUR UNION'S 7 DAYS IN JUNE ACTIONS:

"More than 200 workers at Up-To-Date Laundry in Baltimore won UNITE representation and overwhelmingly ratified their first contract June 20 after a 10-week strike. It took the efforts of the dedicated workers and the help of other unions and religious and community groups—including students from Johns Hopkins Labor Action, NAACP, Ministerial Alliance of Baltimore, Teamsters, SEIU and Casa De Maryland—to get Up-To-Date to recognize its employees' union. For the first time, the whole Baltimore community learned what some employers are really like. The result is an agreement that gives the workers...the rights and respect that every worker is entitled to."

—*Harold Bock, UNITE vice president and director of the Mid-Atlantic region, Baltimore*

**"THANK YOU** for your hard work and support of the workers of America. Recently my husband was fired from Alabama Power—after 29½ years with this company. We find out that Alabama is an 'at will' state and Alabama Power can do what they want. But then in comes IBEW Local 391 to support him. We hope that with the support of these men and women he will get treated fairly and be able to get his job back. I know for sure it couldn't happen without them. I believe members need to show more support for the union, educate and encourage others about the union and...stay better informed about our political reps and how they vote. We as parents and grandparents have got to educate young people about the need for strong unions in America."—*Suzanne Alverson, Talladega, Ala.*

**"CONGRATULATIONS** on another great issue of America@work! It informs, energizes and inspires. And thanks for your creativity and hard work."—*Mildred Jeffrey, Emerita, Wayne State University Board of Governors, Detroit*

**"THANK YOU** for the information contained at [[www.afcio.org](http://www.afcio.org)]. At our church, where I am a lector, parishioners are invited to submit petitions for reading at Mass. I find inspiration for petitions at this site. I appreciate the hints for putting faith to action."—*Lillian Covarrubias, vice president, Toledo (Ohio) Newspaper Guild/CWA 34043*

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## RIGHTS ON THE JOB— WHAT WORKERS SAY

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Get set to join tens of thousands of union members and student, religious, environmental and community activists gathering in Washington, D.C., Sept. 26-Oct. 1 for Global Justice Week





## Council Reaffirms Support for Immigration Reform

The AFL-CIO Executive Council threw its support behind fighting HIV/AIDS and passage of meaningful immigration reform during its August meeting in Chicago. The council also issued statements backing the effort to gain elected officials' support for workers' right to organize and passage of the federal Victim's Economic Safety and Security Act of 2001, which would protect domestic violence victims while at work. And in standing behind the Charleston 5, the South Carolina Longshoremen awaiting trial on trumped-up felony charges, the council said the American labor movement demands charges be dropped against the Charleston 5. "We will wage and escalate this fight until they are free and justice is done," the council said.

The council named six new members and paid tribute to six departing members. New council members are Joe Hunt, Iron Workers president; Cheryl Johnson, United American Nurses president; Bruce Raynor, UNITE president; Clyde Rivers, president of the newly chartered California School Employees Association; Cecil Roberts, Mine Workers president; and Edward Sullivan, AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department president.

Departing from the council are Robert Georgine, former BCTD president; John T. Joyce, former Bricklayers president; Jay Mazur, former UNITE president; James Norton, former president of Graphic Communications; Robert Wages, former PACE executive vice president; and Jake West, former Iron Workers president. ☐

**New faces:** Newly named Executive Council members are (counterclockwise from top left) UNITE President Bruce Raynor, CSEA President Clyde Rivers, Mine Workers President Cecil Roberts, Iron Workers President Joe Hunt, BCTD President Edward Sullivan and UAN President Cheryl Johnson.

RON MILEWSKI/THE BETTER IMAGE

GILES HUDSON

COURTESY MINE WORKERS

RON MILEWSKI/THE BETTER IMAGE

## Mobilize to Block Fast Track Now

With Congress expected to take up Fast Track legislation in September, the AFL-CIO launched a month of events beginning Labor Day and culminating with a week of activities as part of Global Justice Week.

The September mobilization follows an intensive lobbying effort by union members and activists during the August congressional recess. Hundreds of working people met with their representatives in their home districts, urging them to vote against the trade authorization scheme, and thousands more called their members of Congress.

Fast Track would allow President George W. Bush to push trade agreements through Congress with no changes and minimal review. Bush has said he wants Fast Track authority—without labor standards and environmental protections.

As part of the monthlong actions, AFL-CIO officers and Executive Council members will crisscross the country



BILL BURKE/PAGE ONE

**Right track:** Efforts by union activists across the nation to derail Fast Track are moving full speed ahead.

on a bus tour to key congressional districts, attending rallies and vigils to boost efforts by union members to build opposition to Fast Track. State federation presidents from a dozen states also are traveling to Washington, D.C., this month to lobby their representatives to vote against Fast Track.

The campaign will culminate during Global Justice Week, Sept. 26–Oct. 1 (see page 19).

To find out how your union can get involved, visit [www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy](http://www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy). ☐

## Union Lawmakers Back a Living Wage

On Aug. 1, Gloucester County became the second county in New Jersey and the nation's 10th to pass a living wage measure for employees of county contractors. A New Jersey State AFL-CIO-led coalition of affiliated unions, the Southern New Jersey Central Labor Council and community groups started campaigning for the ordinance last year after Head Start workers, members of UAW Local 2327, walked the picket line in freezing temperatures for seven weeks to get a decent wage and benefits agreement with their employer. Among Gloucester's seven freeholders, the equivalent of county commissioners, Freeholder Director Stephen Sweeney, secretary-treasurer of Iron Workers Local 399, led the charge—and the result was a unanimous vote.

Since 1997, the New Jersey State AFL-CIO program to help union members get elected to public office has seen 129 members elected. This year, with Sweeney joining six other union members running for legislative seats and 29 for municipal offices, federation President Charles Wowkanech says, "Here's what happens when members get into the political arena. The next step for us is to have all 21 New Jersey counties adopt a living wage measure." ☐



# Working Partnerships

## SPOTLIGHT

For years, nearly a third of social workers, members of AFSCME Local 1746, left their jobs each year at Cuyahoga County Human Services, the agency that protects endangered children in the Cleveland area.

Then in 1999, a new local president, Pamela Brown, and a new department chief sought to address the high turnover. They placed senior staff, rather than new hires, on the agency's hotline. They got funding for more social workers, so caseloads shrank and turnover fell to less than 1 percent. And now when, tragically, a child dies, a worker gets counseling, not blame.

Identified as a strong union-management collaboration by the Public Sector Labor Management Committee of the AFL-CIO Working for America Institute, Cuyahoga County Human Services is sending union and management leaders to present their work at a *Governing* magazine

conference in Baltimore Oct. 11. Says Allyne Beach, the committee's executive director, "They've done phenomenal work, especially when you consider over 30 states' child protective services have been put in court receivership."

Today, the committee is helping Local 1746 build on its strengths. Union members travel to Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, where they share ideas with experts, management representatives and colleagues in other social service agencies. In one early result of the dialogue, Brown has become part of the Human Service Agency's policy-setting administrative team. To create new relationships with community leaders, members are getting active in their agency's neighborhood advisory groups. "It's the community that often pushes for privatization of government services," Brown says, "so your best defense against it is making allies within the community." ■

## CSEA Joins AFL-CIO

Seeking to increase their voice in state and national politics and in education policy debates, the 125,000 members of the California School Employees Association voted to join the AFL-CIO in August, becoming the federation's 66th independently chartered union.

"We are extremely pleased to be a part of the larger labor movement," says CSEA President Clyde Rivers. "We are looking forward to playing an effective role in advancing the interests of classified school employees at the national level."

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney says "this new alliance will strengthen both organizations, and will mean a stronger future for school employees and for California students and their families."

CSEA was launched 75 years ago after a group of school custodians in Oakland banded together to fight for pension benefits and sick leave. Today it is the largest statewide union for classified school employees in the nation, and includes bus drivers, teaching assistants and cafeteria workers. ■



MICHAEL HOPKINS

**Solidarity:** CSEA members took time out from the union's Las Vegas conference to support HERE members on the picket line.

## Diversity on Screen, Stage and Television

Actors and actresses of color received a record level of television and theatrical roles last year, but there is still plenty of work to do before Hollywood reflects the true diversity of America, according to a Screen Actors' Casting Data Report released in August. The report does not include daytime television, game or reality shows, animated programs or most non-prime time programming.

African Americans received 14.8 percent of the roles cast

last year, up from 14.1 percent in 1999. Latinos were in 4.9 percent of roles cast, up from 4.4 percent. At 2.6 percent Asian/Pacific Islanders were slightly higher than the 2.2 percent in 1999, and Native American Indian roles increased from 0.2 percent in 1999 to 0.3 percent last year.

Although women make up the majority of Americans, men received 62 percent of the roles cast in 2000. Actors and actresses younger than 40 received twice as many roles as those older than 40.

Meanwhile, the Television and Radio Artists recently honored employers and television and radio producers who portray the diversity of America in a realistic and balanced manner. Through its American Scenes Awards, AFTRA awarded two top prizes. KRON-TV in San Francisco was recognized for the diversity of its on-air talent and for its "overall commitment to the coverage of diversity issues." Writer-director Frank Abe won for

his documentary "Conscience and the Constitution" that tells the story of the little-known struggle of the Heart Mountain resisters, a group of young Japanese Americans in an American internment camp. Radio's top prize went to "Unshackled!" a weekly half-hour radio drama broadcast before a live audience in Chicago.

Read SAG's full report on [www.sag.org](http://www.sag.org) and see the full list of AFTRA awards on [www.aftra.org](http://www.aftra.org). ■



## "Music Man" Out of Tune

The famous marching melody "76 trombones" in the current touring revival of "The Music Man" is likely to hit a sour note for working people, says Actors' Equity: The musical is entirely nonunion.

Actors and other union members plan protests and will leaflet performances during the 40-week, nationwide "Music Man" production, which opens in Des Moines, Iowa, Oct. 2.

Big League Theatricals, producer of the show, has rejected Equity's offers for a union contract, says Alan Eisenberg, Equity executive director. "Consequently, the public will pay Broadway prices for a production in which none of the actors has ever appeared on Broadway," he says. "To call this a 'Broadway National Tour' is a sham."

Actors will be paid very low salaries and per diems, with inadequate health benefits and no pensions, Eisenberg says. "These young, inexperienced actors, eager to work, are ripe for exploitation by a greedy producer."

In recent years, nonunion performance tours have begun to compete with those employing Equity actors in major markets. Last year, Equity fined Barry Williams, former star of the 1970s TV show "The Brady Bunch," for touring with a nonunion production of "The Sound of Music."

To find out when "The Music Man" will be in your town, and see a list of upcoming union performances, visit [www.actorsequity.org](http://www.actorsequity.org). @

## Global Anti-Sweatshop Movement Launched

Union, religious and civil rights leaders from around the world launched a first-ever international anti-sweatshop coalition Aug. 7 at a New York City press conference and march. The campaign's goal is educating consumers about the often horrific conditions endured by workers who make popular clothing.

Before marching to protest at Banana Republic, Eddie Bauer and Ann Taylor outlets, UNITE President Bruce Raynor told the crowd of more than 500 anti-sweatshop activists that "it's time for retailers to stop hiding behind high-priced public rela-

tions firms and industry-created cover-ups and finally sit down at the table with workers to develop concrete ways of ending the global sweatshop crisis." AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka said: "No child should ever starve for fashion. No working family should be plunged into poverty for a penny's markdown. We're shining a spotlight on corporate retailers and holding them responsible for the race to the bottom in wages and working conditions that plagues the clothing industry worldwide."

Backed by UNITE, the National Labor Committee,

## Solidarity Across the Sea

In a strong display of international solidarity, NOPEF, the union that represents Norwegian oil workers, has joined with workers on the U.S. Gulf Coast to fight a union-busting corporation.

In Norway, Trico Marine Services Inc., which supplies shipping services to the offshore oil and gas industry, respects workers' right to organize—but not in the United States, where the company is actively anti-union and is fighting an effort by Gulf Coast employees to gain a voice at work with the Mariners Offshore United, a coalition of the Seafarers; Marine Engineers; Masters, Mates & Pilots, an affiliate of the Longshoremen; and the unaffiliated American Maritime Officers.

A delegation of Norwegian union members visited

Trico's shipyard in Louisiana in June and charged that the company was engaging in "very serious trade union-busting."

Urged on by NOPEF, Norwegian oil companies are pressing Trico to end its anti-union actions in the United States. At the same time, in a letter to Trico, NOPEF demanded the company let employees "decide themselves whether they will join a trade union or not, without any interference, harassment, discrimination or threats from the management." If Trico does not agree, NOPEF threatened to refuse to "do work which has anything to do with Trico Marine Services." In response, Trico agreed to send all its U.S. employees the names and addresses of relevant unions. @



**Sweat stop:** Hundreds of workers from around the world rallied in New York to launch a global anti-sweatshop campaign.

the AFL-CIO, United Students Against Sweatshops and workers' groups from countries including the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Guatemala, Thailand, Mexico and Canada, the coalition is planning demonstrations, rallies and other public actions

at major retail outlets throughout the back-to-school and holiday seasons.

For more information, visit [www.behindthelabel.org](http://www.behindthelabel.org), UNITE's new multimedia online community and news site for anti-sweatshop activists. @



# Union Member Spotlighted on PBS

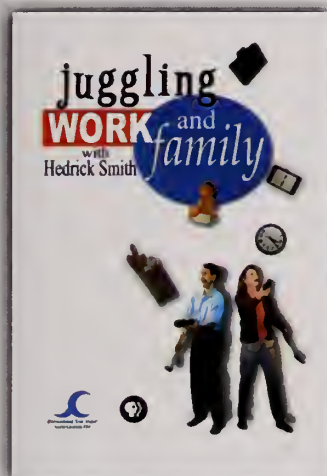
**M**ichael Lancaster never imagined he'd be starring on TV. An operating room support technician in New York City, the single father is raising his 4-year-old daughter and paying college tuition for two other daughters. His work and family balancing act gets a big boost from his union contract, which includes a \$9.5 million child care fund negotiated in 1989 by the Health & Human Service Employees Union, 1199/SEIU.

Lancaster and the innovative fund are highlighted in a new documentary, "Juggling Work and Family," scheduled to air on PBS stations nationwide Sept. 16.

The show's producers, journalist Hedrick Smith and South Carolina ETV, are teaming up with several organizations—including the AFL-CIO, the Economic Policy Institute and the

National Association for the Education of Young Children—to organize community screenings and town meetings and encourage discussion on how businesses, unions and lawmakers can help workers balance work and family.

Action kits with a discussion guide and videocassette of excerpts from the show are available by calling 800-277-0829 or e-mailing [mreap@scetv.org](mailto:mreap@scetv.org). ☐



## LESSON IN PARTNERSHIP

**B**ringing together the strength of more than 3 million union members, AFT and the National Education Association in July approved a groundbreaking partnership agreement.

Known as NEAFT Partnership, the plan creates a joint council made up of 15 members of each organization. The council will decide on the partnership's activities, including holding conferences on topics of common interest and coordinating legislative and legal actions.

"We're very pleased that the AFT and the NEA now will have a more formal partnership that allows us to focus together on goals that we share," says AFT President Sandra Feldman, "especially ensuring that every

child has a quality education." Three years ago, the two unions began encouraging state-level mergers, which since have taken shape in Florida, Minnesota and Montana.

At AFT's conference on educational quality in July, Feldman also called for a national commitment to universal, high-quality preschool education in which parents would pay their share based on their financial ability and families who cannot afford to pay would have the fee waived. "Universal preschool would be preventive medicine for children who don't have exposure to the kinds of experiences that produce early learning and social skills that serve as building blocks for success in later grades," says Feldman. ☐

## OUT FRONT

**I** hope every one of you will join me here in Washington, D.C., later this month for Global Justice Week. We should all be together making our voices heard with strong messages to our government, to multinational corporations and to the world financial institutions:

- **Fast Track is the wrong track.** Don't wait for the end of the month on this one. Call your members of Congress today at 1-800-393-1082. Tell them to reject any Fast Track proposal that does not require enforceable workers' rights and environmental protection as a basic part of all new trade agreements. President Bush wants Fast Track authority so he can push through the Free Trade Area of the Americas treaty—which would spread NAFTA's devastation throughout the Western Hemisphere—without improvements from Congress. Tell him "No!"
- **Cancel the debt.** The IMF and World Bank are forcing nations to underfund programs to meet human needs and sacrifice workers' rights. Countries are being forced to sell their human resources at inhumanely low costs to feed these debt machines. Some countries spend more each year trying to repay loan debts than they are able to spend to meet the basic health, sanitation and education needs of their people—and to arrest the global HIV/AIDS pandemic.
- **Protect immigrant workers' rights and grant undocumented workers legal status.** All workers deserve fairness and basic rights. Immigrants work hard, pay taxes and contribute to our communities. Undocumented immigrants are vulnerable to employer exploitation that lowers the wages and working conditions of all workers. Legal status for undocumented immigrants is only fair, and it will make it harder for employers to intimidate workers who demand fair pay and the freedom to join a union.

The global economy must be made to work for working families everywhere.

When you encounter working people who aren't making the connections between their own well-being and that of undocumented immigrants and families crushed by national debt in developing countries, remind them that an injury to one truly is an injury to all.

Share with them the findings of the AFL-CIO workers' rights survey (see page 8) and talk about what will happen to U.S. workers' already compromised rights when it becomes easier for corporate pirates to exploit more unprotected, low-wage workers around the globe.

Remind them that when corporations and financial institutions deny the rights of workers thousands of miles away, they jeopardize us all. Every worker, everywhere, deserves basic rights on the job. And until the rights of migrant farm workers and maquiladora workers and garment sweatshop workers are assured, none of our rights are secure. ☐

## Meet Me in D.C.



BY JOHN J. SWEENEY

RON MILEWSKI/THE BETTER IMAGE



# RIGHTS on the JOB

By Laureen  
Lazarovici

Ora Lee Dortche, who works at a paper mill outside New Haven, Conn., says managers don't treat workers with much respect these days. Sometimes when women workers take a bathroom break, "the boss comes and knocks on the door," rushing them to get back to work. "There is no respect," says Dortche, a member of PACE International Union Local 1-745. "There should be more laws to protect workers."

Dortche is not alone. A new survey shows that fully 68 percent of workers say workplace rights need more protection. Employers inspire little or no trust among two-thirds of workers. So it's no surprise that 56 percent of workers say new laws are needed to hold corporations accountable for the way they treat employees—up sharply from just a few years ago.

These are among the findings of a new national poll, "Workers' Rights in America," by Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the AFL-CIO. The survey illustrates that as workers celebrate Labor Day this year, they are sending a strong message to corporations and elected officials: Respect our rights at work.

There's a stark difference between the importance workers place on rights in the workplace and how they say employers are treating those rights. Workers are nearly unanimous in their support for rights that protect economic security, equal opportunity and reasonable working conditions. Upwards of 80 percent of respondents say they should be able to earn a decent wage, work free from discrimination and harassment and have at least some degree of privacy on the job. But if employers were children coming home from school with report cards, many of their parents would not be very happy. One-third to one-half of workers give employers mediocre to failing grades on key worker protections. In a pair of alarming findings, almost half of black workers say they have experienced workplace discrimination based on race, and nearly a quarter of women say they have been sexually harassed on the job.

Such first-hand experiences contribute to a simmering sense of dissatisfaction and workers' widespread view that corporations have too much power. As activists help workers form unions and build partnerships with community groups and





**Rights@work:** Like a majority of workers, Ora Lee Dortche, a paper mill worker in New Haven, Conn., says workplace rights need more protection.

elected officials, they can rely on the knowledge that a large majority of the American workforce wants more to be done to uphold rights at work.

### **Workers crave rights on the job—but many say workers aren't getting them**

Workers crave basic rights on the job, but large percentages say workers are not getting those rights. This frustration exists even though more than half those surveyed express economic optimism (54 percent rate their own financial situation as good or excellent). Fully 87 percent of workers say the right to a living wage that provides a full-time worker an income above the poverty line is an essential or very important right to protect. But more than half grade employers with a C, D or F when it comes to protecting this right.

And while 85 percent say workers should have job security unless there is a good cause for termination, four in 10 give employers poor grades on that count. "When you go to work, you ought to be able to expect that if you do a good job, you won't get fired. That's just being fair," says a store clerk from California.

The contrast is much the same for a wide range of workers' rights:

- Nearly everyone surveyed—98 per-

cent—says a safe and healthy workplace is an essential or very important right, but almost one-third give employers mediocre to failing grades on protecting this right.

- Eighty-one percent say the right to training and assistance if one's job moves to another country is essential or very important, although 45 percent rate employers poorly on upholding this right.

- An overwhelming 94 percent say it is essential or very important that employers treat workers with respect, but 37 percent say employers aren't doing a good job at this.

- While 82 percent say privacy on the job is an essential or very important right, 41 percent rate employers poorly on protecting this right. A recent survey from the American Management Association found the percentage of U.S. firms that record and review employee communications and activities on the job—including phone calls, e-mail, Internet connections and computer files—has doubled to 78 percent since 1997.

### **Workers find discrimination, sexual harassment at work**

When it comes to equal opportunity—the right to equal treatment regardless of race or ethnicity, the right not to be sexually harassed, the right to equal pay and advancement for working women—nearly 100 percent of workers from every demographic group say these are essential or very important rights. But many say employers are not ensuring workplaces provide the protections or opportunities workers say are critical.

Forty-seven percent of African American workers say they've experienced race-based job discrimination. The figures for Latinos (30 percent of whom say they've experienced discrimination) and Asians (24 percent) also are higher than the 18 percent of workers in general who say they've suffered workplace discrimination. Not surprisingly, 37 percent of workers give employers unsatisfactory marks on preventing racial and ethnic discrimination. "It's a shame that in 2001 we still have people who see your race before they see how good a worker you are," says a black male teacher who lives in Pennsylvania.

Nearly a quarter of women—23 percent—say they have been sexually harassed. Twenty-seven percent of workers say employers are falling short when it comes to preventing sexual harassment. The federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reports the number of sexual harassment charges filed increased 50 percent between 1992 and 2000. Workers who have experienced discrimination or harassment say it is hard to successfully address the problem of bias on the job: 62 percent say it is "very" or "somewhat" difficult. "A lot of women don't feel safe because of the way management talks to them and treats them like dirt," says Dortche. "They are afraid to file charges because they are afraid they will lose their jobs."

Fully 92 percent of workers say it is essential or very important to protect the right to equal treatment regardless of age.

**About the Survey—**Peter D. Hart Research Associates conducted a telephone survey July 5–9, 2001, of 1,792 adults representing a cross-section of adults in the U.S. workforce, as well as oversamples of several demographic groups: African Americans, Latinos, Asians, high-tech workers and union members. To ensure an accurate representation of adults nationwide, weights were applied to some responses. The margin of error is plus or minus 3.5 percent. The report is available at [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org) or for \$10 from the AFL-CIO Support Services Department at 800-442-5645.



# RIGHTS on the JOB

But almost half of workers (45 percent) grade employers poorly on protecting workers against age discrimination. The EEOC in 2000 received the highest number of age-discrimination complaints since 1995. "Age discrimination is a major problem," says Rod Olson, a member of Painters and Allied Trades Local 97/ District 30 in Aurora, Ill. "I've seen people forced out of their jobs and laid off. Employers have to realize that younger workers learn from older workers."

While 88 percent say it is essential or very important to protect the right to reasonable accommodations to allow people with disabilities to work, 39 percent give employers low grades in respecting this right.

White workers value protecting workers of color from discrimination, men support women's right to equal pay and younger workers say protection against age discrimination is key—indicating workers' views do not reflect merely their own self-interest.

## Little trust in corporations

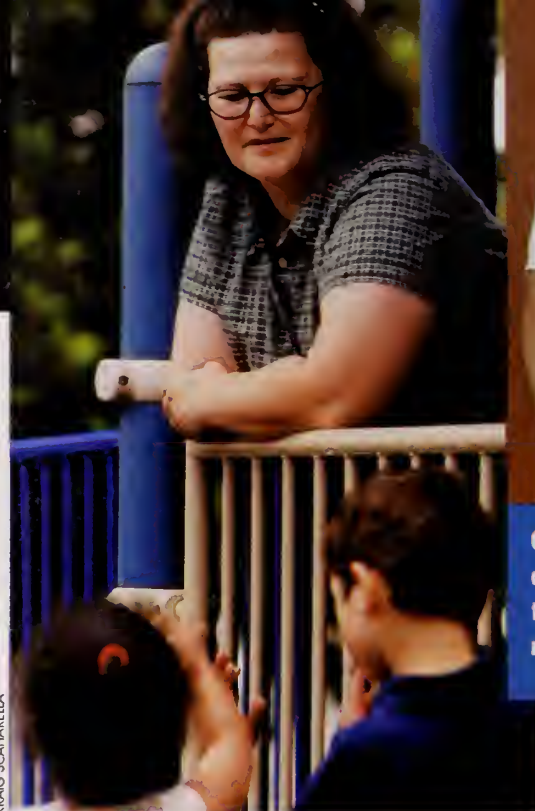
The subterranean river that runs beneath their discontent is workers' growing sense that corporations have too much power and can't be trusted to treat workers fairly. In 1996, 47 percent of workers said management had too much power. Today, 57 percent say management has too much power.

## Strong Support for the Freedom to Choose a Union

A strong 68 percent of workers support workers' right to choose a union. Workers in every demographic group back this right. A near-unanimous majority (94 percent) say firing an employee for supporting union representation is an "unacceptable action," and 80 percent of workers are aware that such actions are against the law.

This solid backing for workers' right to choose a voice at work, however, contrasts starkly with the obstacles workers face when they try to form a union. Employers illegally fire union supporters in 31 percent of organizing campaigns, according to Cornell University scholar Kate Bronfenbrenner, and most use other legal but egregious tactics to thwart workers' efforts to form unions. A recent report by Human Rights Watch shows that existing laws are too lax and unenforced to prevent employer attacks on workers' rights. For instance, while employers can prevent unions from contacting workers at their workplaces to discuss the advantages of union membership, they are free to deluge workers with anti-union messages.

"We pick the people we want to represent us in Washington. So why shouldn't it be just as easy to vote for who we want to represent us at work?" wonders a survey respondent from Pennsylvania. ■



KRAIG SCHAFER/ELA



SARA HOSKINS

**On the job:** Rod Olson (right), a painter in Illinois, says age discrimination is a problem at work, while preschool teacher Jenni Sprague says management "has way too much power."

"People experience management's favoritism and disrespectful comments," says Jenni Sprague, a preschool teacher and member of AFT Local 3432 in Portland, Ore. "Management has way too much power."

Some 63 percent of workers say they have little or no trust that employers will treat workers fairly. And workers see corporations as willing to exchange workers' rights for bigger profits, with 63 percent saying corporations generally pursue profits at the expense of loyalty to employees. Only 27 percent say corporations do a good job of balancing these interests. "It's all about the money—work faster, do more with fewer people," says a nurse in North Carolina. "I see it every day. Sometimes I feel like a machine, not a person."

More than three-quarters of workers say management or stockholders benefited most from the recent economic boom. But in an economic slowdown, 81 percent say employees would have to sacrifice the most.

Against this background of unfettered corporations and rights denied, America's workers increasingly are clamoring for change. Fully 56 percent say new laws are needed to hold corporations to a higher standard of responsibility in the way they treat workers. This is up from 44 percent in 1996.

At the same time workers are calling for more laws, they mistakenly think they have more legal rights in the workplace than they actually do. Nearly two-thirds of workers say an employer cannot legally fire an employee with a good performance record without a good reason. They are wrong. And 60 percent say it is against the law to refuse to provide sick leave. They, too, are wrong. Without a union contract specifically addressing these issues, employers essentially can do whatever they want. The survey seems to indicate that workers think employer behavior they find morally unacceptable also is legally unacceptable.

Workers say corporations haven't lived up to their expectations and don't deserve much trust. A substantial proportion say workers aren't getting the fair wages, fair treatment and respect they want at work. To corporate America and to elected officials, working families are calling for real protection of workplace rights. "There should be more laws to protect workers," says Sprague, the preschool teacher. "I don't think you can have enough protections. There's always the opportunity for abuse of power." ■



At an April 2001 meeting of the Sprint Corp., an astounding 46 percent

of shareholders approved a proposal brought by the Electrical Workers' Pension Benefit Fund and the New York State Common Retirement Fund. The activists sought to stop Sprint board members from unilaterally allowing the re-pricing of executives' stock options, which would dilute the value of the company—and workers' pension funds.

"This 46 percent favorable vote clearly shows that shareholders are fed up with the compensation policies at Sprint," says IBEW President Edwin Hill. "These policies are directly affecting the retirement savings of America's working families." Another shareholder resolution to curb executive golden parachutes at Sprint did almost as well by garnering a 34 percent vote. It was brought by the Amalgamated Bank's LongView Collective Investment Funds, which consists of many union-sponsored pension funds.

The IBEW proposal was among a record 175 sponsored by union members or their collectively bargained pension funds in the 2001 proxy season concluded in late June, according to the Rockville, Md.-based Proxy Voter Services, which advises pension funds and their asset managers on how to exercise proxies, the corporate governance votes accorded shareholders.

Ninety-one of those 175 proposals came to a vote, and 16 won a majority—an all-time high after 14 wins last year. And that's up from an average of fewer than 100 union-sponsored proposals annually in the mid-1990s, of which fewer than 50 came to a vote each year. Even if actions don't get a majority of proxy votes, corporate executives and board members still pay close attention to the opinions of their institutional owners as expressed by these actions—and that in turn can make board members and managers more accountable.

A combination of Wall Street's downturn, an increasingly global economy and excessive executive pay is fueling shareholder activism. "When corporate board members pay CEOs multimillions, or approve practices that expose companies to lawsuits, they're potentially diluting companies' value," says Stephen Sleight, director of strategic resources for the Machinists. "And then shareholder value—including union pension plans that have money invested in those companies—is also diluted."

Many institutional investors applaud unions' growing role as ownership advocates. In 1997, the AFL-CIO initiated its Capital Stewardship Program to help union-sponsored pension funds promote, at the companies in which they invest, corporate governance structures and specific policies that promote long-term value creation for shareholders.

"The Capital Stewardship Program has brought union pension funds into the ownership world," says Bob Monks, a godfather of shareholder activism who supervised the nation's pension system for the U.S. Department of Labor under the Reagan administration in the mid-1980s. "It has related the union movement as an owner to other owners, such as public employee pension funds and

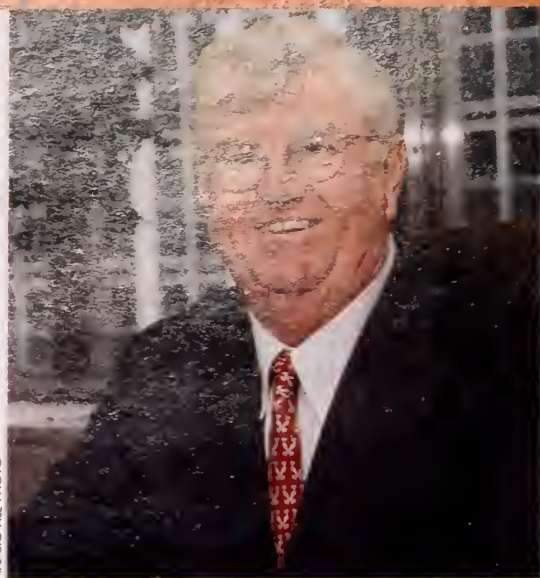
anyone else willing to participate," he adds. "And by being shareholder activists, unions give workers another reason to join them—the union is fighting for their pension value."

# Taking Stock

BY JANE BIRNBAUM

Shareholder activists are increasingly speaking out—their actions range from opposing bloated executive paychecks that diminish members' pension benefits to urging high-road workplace standards that build genuine value for shareholders. And by investing workers' capital in ventures with sustainable long-term value, shareholder activists are also improving the lives of working families and the health of their communities. Rather than be passive captives of the stock market, "workers' voices are being heard on Wall Street," says AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka. "Union pension fund trustees are rising to the challenge of active, responsible ownership."





**Invested:** IUOE President Frank Honley says the union's pension fund encourages good corporate practices that ultimately mean better pensions for workers.

Without question, the 1990s "bull market" was kind to worker pension funds. According to the AFL-CIO Office of Investment, the value of union-sponsored pension funds grew from \$156 billion in 1990 to \$412 billion in 2001. "But no one can predict where Wall Street is heading, nor how desperately executives and board members could act to protect their own interests," says Michael Fanning, CEO of the Operating Engi-

neers' Central Pension Fund. "That's more reason for activists to use their clout to protect workers' pension investments by fighting excessive CEO pay and low-road decisions that expose companies to lawsuits," he adds.

The IUOE's pension fund is one of labor's most active. Since 1995, it has submitted 26 shareholder proposals for companies in which it has significant holdings. Of the 14 that shareholders voted on, four received majority votes—and the average vote was "a solid 41.4 percent," Fanning reports.

Conventional investing wisdom suggests that shareholders disapproving of management's actions should simply sell their shares. But pension fund trustees such as the Operating Engineers are successful precisely because they choose to stay put and advocate for corporate practices that protect shareholder value. Over the long run, companies that adopt high-road practices in the workplace and the boardroom will be best positioned to enjoy sustainable value creation, they say.

Explains IUOE President Frank Hanley: "The 'Wall Street walk' of selling our shares if we have performance-related problems with a company's management does not work. Instead, the fund

encourages and supports companies to build value through good corporate practices...that ultimately affect the bottom line. And a better bottom line means better pensions for workers."

Shareholder actions are aimed at engaging a corporation's board members. These directors hire and fire CEOs, set their pay and approve corporate policies and strategies. By law, they're supposed to act solely to protect shareholder value—but sometimes they put their own personal interests first, pension fund trustees say.

This year, for example, the IUOE's pension fund brought an action asking that two-thirds of the members of the Kohl's Corp. retail chain's board be financially and personally

Quebec City, Canada, 12-13 October 2001



LYNNE BAKER

**Global standards:** "Responsible companies should be concerned about their human rights practices," says PACE President Boyd Young.

independent of Kohl's. One current director recently rented 14 store sites to Kohl's for \$4 million. Another owns shares of a law firm that works for Kohl's. "How independent could they be?" Fanning asks.

After talks with pension fund representatives, Kohl's agreed to fill future board seats with independent directors until they are in the majority. The fund then withdrew its proposal. "We consider the Kohl's outcome to be superior," says Fanning. "If board members are independent, they're likelier to make decisions solely to enhance shareholder value."

Legally, shareholder resolutions almost always are nonbinding and advisory—but they're still worth bringing, according to pension fund trustees. These proposals help raise public consciousness about business practices that affect shareholder value. And when directors run for election, shareholders can judge whether the directors represent them appropriately—which can include whether board members have implemented proposals that drew sizable proxy approval.

Increasingly, shareholders are targeting directors who don't take their advice. For example, Eastman Kodak has ignored SEIU Master Trust pension fund-sponsored proposals—which received majority votes in four consecutive years—calling for the election of directors all at once rather than in staggered elections.

Staggered elections allow management to entrench itself, making it less account-

**Bad business:** The ICEM, AFL-CIO and CalPers called for Unocal and Holliburton corporations to end business in Burma, where forced labor is widespread.

Hi!  
My name is  
CHUCK  
+  
I like brutal  
military regimes



able to shareholders and their concerns about value. To show their disapproval, SEIU mounted a "vote no" campaign during 2001 board elections. In a "vote no" campaign, shareholders are urged to withhold their votes. SEIU succeeded in getting 17 percent of the votes withheld—a huge "no" vote given that the Kodak management directors were running unopposed.

### Curbing excessive corporate pay

In 2000, Sprint Corp. CEO William Esrey's total compensation, including stock options, was a whopping \$69.3 million, according to company proxy statements. On an April 21, 2001, "ABC World News Tonight" program, he justified such gargantuan pay: "We're not going to get the best and brightest and we're not going to keep them unless we pay competitive salaries." But with Sprint's FON Group's stock plummeting more than 69 percent and its PCS Group's shares tanking more than 61 percent in 2000—a heavy hit on value for shareholders, including workers with union pensions—investors must wonder whether "the best and the brightest" are helming Sprint.

Much of executive compensation comes as stock option grants that generally allow corporate chieftains to buy shares of the company below market price, which is why the IBEW Pension Benefit Fund—which holds nearly 75,000 Sprint shares—brought its shareholder action this spring.

"The more shares the board gives away through re-pricing, the more they dilute stock value and the smaller the dividends for shareholders, including our members," says Jim Combs, IBEW director of corporate affairs.

With the public New York State Common Retirement Fund, IBEW reached out to the investment community on the shareholder action to prohibit re-pricing. By working with the Council for Institutional Investors—comprising union pensions, such large public funds as the California Public Employees' Retirement System (one of the world's largest pension funds) and the public-private Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association-College Retirement Equities Fund (TIAA-CREF), plus some corporate pension funds—the activists won a whopping 46 percent "yes" vote.

COURTESY IBEW



Better options: Sprint's shareholders are "fed up" with the company's compensation policies, says IBEW President Edwin Hill.

### Boosting workplace standards worldwide

In a global economy, protecting workers' and human rights abroad has become a shareholder issue, because "abusing people creates financial risks for investors," explains Kenneth Zinn, North American regional coordinator for the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions.

This year, ICEM joined the AFL-CIO and CalPers to support three resolutions—brought by the Amalgamated Bank's LongView Collective Investment Funds, the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers and other groups—calling for business practice changes by Unocal Corp. and the Halliburton Co., formerly headed by Vice President Dick Cheney.

Unocal and Halliburton are among the few U.S.-based corporations still doing busi-

## Action Resources

If your union oversees retirement plans, it is a corporate shareholder. Your union can put proposals before fellow shareholders or encourage your pension fund trustees to get active. To learn more about shareholder advocacy, check out these resources:

- **Investment Product Review:** The result of a 1998 AFL-CIO Executive Council Pension Committee initiative, the *Investment Product Review* offers union-sponsored pension trustees and other fiduciaries a uniform system of criteria and ratings for judging financial instruments marketed as "worker-friendly." The annual report does not evaluate any investment's financial performance or potential impact on benefit fund portfolios.
  - **Key Votes Survey:** Because proxies—the voting rights attached to company stock—are pension plan assets that must be managed according to federal pension regulations, union pension fund trustees need to monitor how their investment managers vote those proxies. The AFL-CIO's annual *Key Votes Survey* helps trustees do that by surveying how investment managers vote.
- For free copies of both publications, call the AFL-CIO's Office of Investment at 202-637-3900.
- **The Council of Institutional Investors—[www.cii.org](http://www.cii.org)**—is an organization of Taft-Hartley, large public and corporate pension funds that researches investment issues affecting the size and security of members' assets.
  - **The Heartland Labor Capital Network—[www.heartlandnetwork.org](http://www.heartlandnetwork.org)**—explores investment in smaller manufacturing and related worker-friendly enterprises. Coordinated by the Heartland Working Group and chaired by Steelworkers President Leo Gerard, the network is an alliance of individuals and groups concerned with union capital and regional economic issues. @





**Streetwise:** AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka: "Workers' voices are being heard on Wall Street."

ness in Burma, ruled by a military regime implicated in forced labor, narcotics trafficking and banning of unions. Unocal is the dictatorship's joint venture partner in Burma's \$1.2 billion Yadana gas pipeline, which Halliburton helped build.

Burmese workers alleging they were forced to work on the pipeline have sued Unocal in federal and California state courts, and damages could exceed \$1 billion, according to the AFL-CIO's Office of Investment. "The lawsuits can only tarnish Unocal's reputation among investors and potentially reduce shareholder value," says Zinn.

One of the shareholder actions urged the board of Unocal—which PACE International Union Director of Special Projects Joe Drexler calls a corporate "pariah"—to adopt and

enforce a workplace code of conduct based on International Labor Organization conventions on workers' rights, including the right to free association, collective bargaining and no forced labor. "If Unocal truly implemented a workplace code of conduct that fully complied with the ILO conventions, it would have to pull out of Burma," Zinn says. The proposal got an "incredible 22 percent, with another 6 percent abstaining," he adds, estimating that 22 percent represents nearly \$1.5 billion in shareholders' capital.

These proposals followed a 1997 shareholder action by PACE International Union asking the ARCO oil company board to investigate charges that the Burmese regime's oil company, with which it was in business, was laundering money from heroin sales. Pat Patterson, a PACE Local

8-675 member, pipe fitter and today unit chair at the Carson, Calif., British Petroleum facility (British Petroleum subsequently bought ARCO), brought the action at the behest of PACE's Special Projects Department.

After attending a Free Burma Coalition conference at the University of California at Los Angeles, Patterson educated co-workers. Then, at the ARCO shareholder meeting in Los Angeles, PACE members rallied with other activists and spoke to shareholders.

Soon after, the Los Angeles City Council voted not to purchase from companies, including ARCO, doing business in Burma. On the eve of a nationwide PACE- and Free Burma Coalition-sponsored teach-in on Burma, the Clinton administration placed limited sanctions on businesses starting new ventures there. In 1998, ARCO pulled out of Burma.



COURTESY PAT PATTERSON

**Direct action:** Pat Patterson, a pipe fitter and PACE Local 8-675 member (right), spearheaded a successful shareholder action that got the oil company ARCO out of Burma.



DAVE CAMPBELL

**Victory:** ARCO oil company pulled out of Burma in part due to shareholder action by PACE.

"These actions demonstrate that the interests of protecting shareholder value and workers' rights can converge, and responsible companies should be concerned about their human rights practices," says PACE President Boyd Young.

A big honor for Patterson was meeting Vicki Middleton, a Burma activist and wife of a former ARCO executive and board member. Says Middleton, "When Pat spoke, it made it so much easier for so many more people to also take a stand." Bringing the proposal, says Patterson, was "an experience that broadened my perspective on human rights worldwide and made me realize I could have an impact." ☐



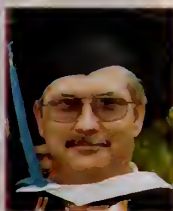
**T**he National Labor College's Class of 2001—118 strong—was graduated June 30. The Labor College's unique curriculum allows union members to gain a college degree and continue to work.

Earning their degrees while working, tending families and being active in their union demonstrates the commitment of the graduates to building social and economic justice, says AFL-CIO President John Sweeney. "To anyone who would challenge you as you fight for working families, your degree will sound the alarm: Danger: Educated Union Member," he told the graduates.

# Class

Each year, as a requisite for graduation, seniors write papers on issues affecting the union movement, seeking innovative strategies to advance the ability of workers to gain a voice at work. Forty graduating seniors received awards or honorable mentions for their presentations, and 27 were presented in a senior symposium the day before the graduation ceremonies. "The senior papers you created have made this campus one of the most important think tanks for working families in America," Sweeney said.

The four senior projects spotlighted below confront issues as varied as political voting patterns, building unions by developing leaders among workers of color and women, reaching out to fee-paying nonmembers and enacting needed legislation.



BY JAMES B. PARKS

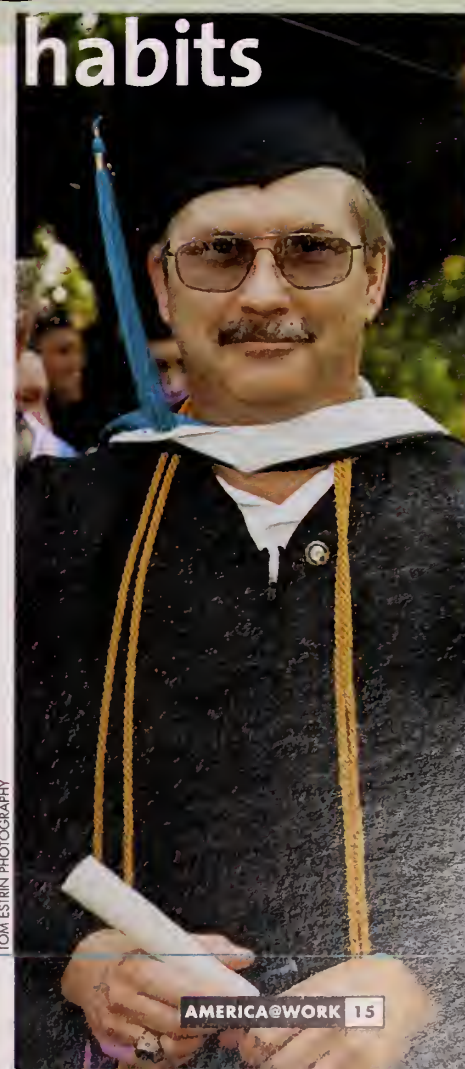
# Strategies

## Measuring voting habits

**F**or three years, Gary Buresh spent his vacations at the National Labor College taking courses that "changed my whole way of thinking about things," he says. "I was frustrated because the world is changing around us and the courses helped me figure out ways for me and my union to do our jobs better." A few months before graduation, Buresh, 45, who had been business manager for Electrical Workers Local 271 in Wichita, Kan., was named to IBEW's international staff, working out of Oklahoma City.

In his senior project, *Measuring Apprenticeship Voting Habits*, Buresh demonstrated how a union's well-planned, continuous political education program positively influences apprentices' voting habits.

Buresh first surveyed 130 apprentices in the Wichita Electrical Training Program to assess their political knowledge, viewpoints and involvement. He found the apprentices primarily judged candidates based on their position on issues that affect the workers' personal finances—job creation, taxes and wages. Such issues as abortion, gun control and reducing the federal deficit ranked low. At the onset of the survey, the apprentices were about evenly divided in party affiliation: 30 registered Democrats, 25 Republican, six Independents, 16 in other parties and the rest not registered to vote.



TOM ESTRIN PHOTOGRAPHY

RICK REINHARD



After the first survey, Buresh led a series of classes for the apprentices based on the AFL-CIO Common Sense Economics program, which enables workers to learn more about the economy and unions' role in the economy.

"You could see the light bulbs coming on in the students' heads," he says. "They understood what was happening in the economy and in politics."

To build on the Common Sense Economics classes, the union enlisted the apprentices in the three weeks prior to the 2000 election to distribute union political materials about working family issues to other members at their jobsites. Many apprentices also took the materials home to discuss with their families.

After the 2000 election, Buresh conducted a second survey among the apprentices that showed 36 registered to vote after taking the Common Sense Economics class. Almost all registered as Democrats, bringing the registration totals among the apprentices to 51 Democrats, 29 Republicans, 12 Independents, one Libertarian and 20 in other parties. Some 72 percent of apprentices voted in 2000, up from 45 percent in 1998. Two-thirds voted for Al Gore, while statewide, Gore received only 37 percent of the vote.

Buresh found his education efforts were boosted when apprentices received direct contact on the issues from their unions. Thirty apprentices said they received a telephone call from another union member about the election. Half of those voted for Gore. About 60 percent said they received campaign literature from their local unions, and most said they discussed the literature with their family and co-workers.

Buresh already has put his knowledge to work in his new job as union representative in Oklahoma City. With Oklahoma facing a September initiative on whether to become a so-called right to work state, he is teaching Common Sense Economics to apprenticeship classes there and involving apprentices in distributing political education materials to other union members. He is spreading the word to IBEW locals throughout Oklahoma that apprentices are untapped and enthusiastic sources for political action.

"The study shows that if we do our work well, spend the time to prepare good political materials and are ready to discuss political issues openly, people will listen and become involved," Buresh says. "And when they are educated and involved, working people can make the difference in elections." ■



TOM ESTRIN PHOTOGRAPHY

## Saving bus drivers' and passengers' lives

Lori Springer says every class she took at the National Labor College had a direct impact on her job as recording and financial secretary of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 265 in Campbell, Calif. "I used things I learned in industrial hygiene and ergonomics classes to fight local battles for transit workers," she says. When she retires in a few years, Springer, 46, says she wants to work full time on health and safety issues.

Her senior project, *Mandating Two-Way Communication Systems Onboard*

*Public Transit Buses in California*, addresses a matter of life and death for bus drivers and passengers. Although most public transit buses in California are equipped with two-way radios, there is no law requiring them and there are no statewide minimum standards or maintenance requirements for the radios. As a result, drivers and passengers are in danger if a poorly maintained radio malfunctions during an emergency.

Springer set out to get a state law passed requiring that buses have the radios and



that they be properly maintained. First, she reviewed research from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health that showed nine of the 10 factors that increase a worker's risk of assault were inherent in driving a public bus. From other studies, she garnered statistics that suggest a person is more likely to become a victim of crime on a bus than elsewhere in the community. She also reviewed several studies that point out the need for emergency communications systems on public transportation. The studies showed that bus driving is extremely stressful and that criminal and medical emergencies on buses are increasing. One report, from the *Journal of Epidemiological Medicine*, showed California's estimated annual rate of assault on the job is highest among public transit and school bus drivers.

Armed with data showing the dangers involved for bus drivers, she sought and received support from the transit unions in the state. "Even though we have our differences, we all agreed on this health and safety issue," she says. Springer convinced ATU lobbyist Barry Broad to draft the legislation and present it to the California Conference Board, made up of the 15 ATU locals in the state. The group added the bill to its legislative agenda.

As she prepared for her graduation from the Labor College, Springer followed the progress of the bill winding its way through the legislature. On Feb. 23, Rep. Jenny Oropeza (D) introduced Assembly Bill 1079, which would mandate two-way communications on public buses. In May, the bill passed the state House unanimously, and is now working its way through the Senate. ☐

RICK REINHARD



## Motivating members to get involved

Sam Kirkland's classmates at the National Labor College selected him as one of their commencement speakers—a special honor, he says, for a man who went to work on an automobile assembly shop floor right out of high school. Now at age 45, he is proud to be able to tell his daughters that “you’re never too old to learn and to grow.” Kirkland, who works in the UAW's Organizing Department, says the NLC experience gave him the knowledge he needs to help other workers.

His project, *Black Men in Unions: Making a Difference in Union and Community Leadership*, sought to measure the effectiveness of educational programs in motivating people of color, especially black men, to get involved in union and community leadership. He focused on the work of the Black Men in Unions Institute (BMIU), the Latina/o Workers Leadership Institute and the Summer School for Women Workers, all conducted by the University of Michigan Labor Studies Center.

He compared the techniques these conferences used to develop curricula with those of other educational programs and identified a key element of success: Participants in the Michigan institutes set the educational agenda, deciding which skills should be emphasized in workshops. Teachers for each workshop then paired with a front-line worker and the two jointly conducted the sessions. In the other groups, the leadership set the goals and curriculum.

Kirkland surveyed 423 of this year's participants in the BMIU Institute, where attendance has increased from 70 in 1986 to 680 this year. He asked respondents to indicate whether the

education they received at the Institute had a high impact, low impact or no impact on their level of trade union activism and their level of community and civic activism. He also asked them to comment on the impact.

Some 67 percent said the training they received helped them increase their level of union activism, and an overwhelming 92 percent said it had increased their community involvement.

Gerald Kariem, a UAW shop committee member responding to the survey, says leading a BMIU workshop helped him develop the communications skills he needed to seek a leadership role in his local union. He also thinks BMIU's emphasis on participant planning of workshops allows African Americans opportunities to develop skills in planning and implementing a program—skills that other conferences do not build.

As people of color and women become larger proportions of the workforce, unions must find a way to grow new leaders among African Americans, Latinos and other racial and ethnic groups, Kirkland says. His survey shows that traditional methods of leadership training, which emphasize top-down approaches, do not work as well with people of color as those that allow the participants to set priorities and plan and develop their own curriculum, he says. Kirkland hopes to help develop educational programs based on the techniques used by the BMIU Institute, the Latina/o Workers Leadership Institute and the Summer School for Women Workers that can be used throughout the country by local unions seeking to increase minority leadership. ☐



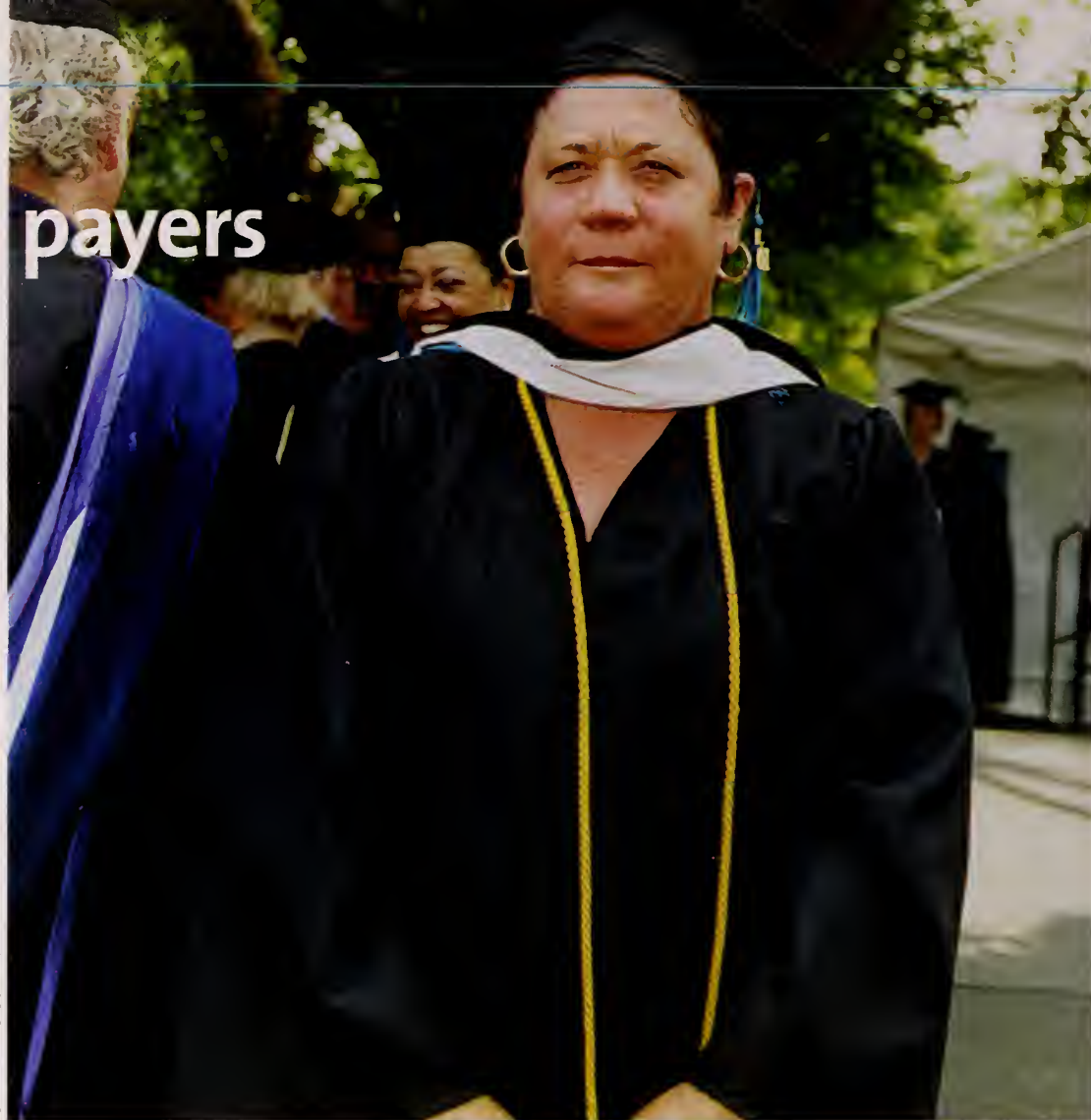
# Reaching out to service-fee payers

**G**ezelle Oliver is a pioneer at the National Labor College: She is one of 11 graduates to take part in a joint AFT/National Education Association pilot project in which members of both unions take courses at the National Labor College. "It was a great opportunity, and the information was so practical for my everyday work," says Oliver, 41, a representative for the Michigan Education Association (MEA) in Ann Arbor.

In her project, *Determining Why Workers Choose to Be Union Service-Fee Payers Within the Michigan Education Association*, she sought to develop a strategy to build the union by organizing workers who are represented by the union, but pay a service fee instead of joining.

She surveyed service-fee payers in southern Michigan to determine their attitudes about the MEA. When asked why they had not joined the union, a majority of the fee payers said they thought a union should provide contract negotiations and job protection and create vehicles to help members succeed on the job. Yet, some indicated that when the union protects its members, it also sometimes protects members they viewed as incompetent.

About half of the respondents also said they would consider joining if the union made some changes. When asked what they wanted the union to do, most focused on the importance of collective bargaining. Others said they wanted the union to promote teacher training, research new information on the learning process and offer continuing education scholarships—all services the union currently provides.



TOM ESTRIN PHOTOGRAPHY

Oliver concludes unions must do a better job of communicating with and educating members and nonmembers, especially on the connections between political strength and collective bargaining. Members also need to reach out more to nonmembers and discuss the benefits of joining the union.

"All unions need to find ways to organize new members," she says. "One of the options is to try to make units completely union. These nonmembers are already in the schools and we represent them, so we

should figure out how best to educate them and communicate our message."

She hopes to develop an educational campaign for MEA through which the union can address the concerns of the service-fee payers and possibly convince them to join and become active members, creating stronger local, state and national unions. ☐

*Senior project papers from 1999 to 2001 are available at the George Meany Center for Labor Studies library, 10000 New Hampshire Ave., Silver Spring, Md., 20903; 301-431-6400.*



TOM ESTRIN PHOTOGRAPHY

## Inspiring Others

**W**hen William Hein received his degree from the National Labor College in June, he not only fulfilled an important life goal, but also inspired everyone who knew what it took for him to reach this milestone.

Hein, a UAW steward at Miller Brewing Co. in Milwaukee, began taking classes at the NLC in 1998. This past May, after suffering from back pains, he was diagnosed with terminal cancer.

But Hein was determined to be at his commencement. Sitting in a wheelchair, on reduced oral morphine and with an epidural delivering

pain killer to his spine, Hein delivered his senior paper, "Is There Apathy in the Rank and File?" along with the other graduates who received awards or honorable mentions for their projects. And on graduation day, he was there to shake hands with AFL-CIO President John Sweeney and receive his diploma.

Hein's passion was workplace safety and health. He worked diligently on the local and national levels to provide safety training and assistance to workers and employers, and in 1997 he won the outstanding service award from the National Safety Council.

"Bill was one of the staunchest union guys you'd ever want to know. He used his vacation time to attend classes at the Labor College. Going to his graduation meant everything to him," says Abby O'Dess, his wife of 18 years.

Hein, 48, died Aug. 2, little more than a month after he graduated. ☐



# A Week for Global Justice

BY JAMES B. PARKS

**T**ens of thousands of union members and student, environmental, religious and community activists will gather in Washington, D.C., Sept. 26–Oct. 1 for a Global Justice Week during the annual meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Through rallies, marches, teach-ins and street actions, the demonstrators will focus their protests on the indiscriminate privatization of jobs in the global economy, the fight to stop Fast Track trade authorization, the need for debt relief for poor countries and the high cost of drugs to treat HIV/AIDS.

“By building a broad international network of labor and citizen groups, we will confront the serious moral issues created by the current global economic system. And we will fight against global and financial policies that benefit investors and corporations at the expense of the world’s working families and workers’ rights,” says Communications Workers of America President Morton Bahr, chairman of the AFL-CIO Executive Council international affairs committee.

Two years after protesters outside WTO meetings in Seattle succeeded in bringing to light the need for open trade talks that include workers’ and human rights and protections for the environment, the architects of globalization have changed their rhetoric, but not their policies, says Hal Leyshon. Leyshon, president of the Washington and Orange Counties Labor Council in Montpelier, Vt., will join a contingent of New England trade unionists traveling to Washington to take part in the six-day

series of mass mobilization events known as “S30.”

“Globalization is not about free trade at all,” he says. “It really means deregulation of the world economy and an attack on the things we have fought for, such as workers’ rights and environmental protection.”

## The truth behind privatization

The World Bank and IMF routinely require developing countries to privatize state-owned industries as a condition of receiving loans. The privatization usually benefits wealthy corporations, often at the expense of working families and their unions.

When a public service is turned over to private companies, unions that represent workers often are disbanded or broken, says Beatrice Edwards, international financial institutions coordinator for Public Services International. PSI is the worldwide trade union federation representing public-sector unions. After the collective bargaining process is dismantled, the new owners often ignore workers’ rights and drive down wages while raising the price of the goods produced, she says.

The global rush to privatization of public jobs primarily benefits the wealthy and has cost good-paying jobs in the United States and in developing countries. Increasingly, a full-fledged shift from publicly to privately managed public services is being used to boost profits and break unions, driving down workers’ living standards, Edwards says.

The consequences of privatization can be brutal: In Cochabamba, Bolivia, privatization of water in 1999 resulted in rate hikes of 200 percent to 300 percent for



JIM LEVITT

Building momentum: From Seattle to Genoa, Italy, union members are working in broad coalitions for a fair global economy.



some Cochabamban families. Households with \$100 in monthly income were paying \$25 to \$30 monthly for their water, according to the Institute for Policy Studies, a nonprofit think tank. Union leader Oscar Olivera led a coalition of unions, peasant groups, farmer organizations and neighborhood associations that successfully fought back a water privatization scheme mandated by the World Bank.

"Oscar and his sisters and brothers in Cochabamba are showing all of us just how important it is to stand up to the World Bank and other global financial institutions," says AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson. "The message out of Cochabamba is: No more free-market schemes and no more privatization scams that run like a bulldozer over workers' rights."

### Fast Track is the wrong track

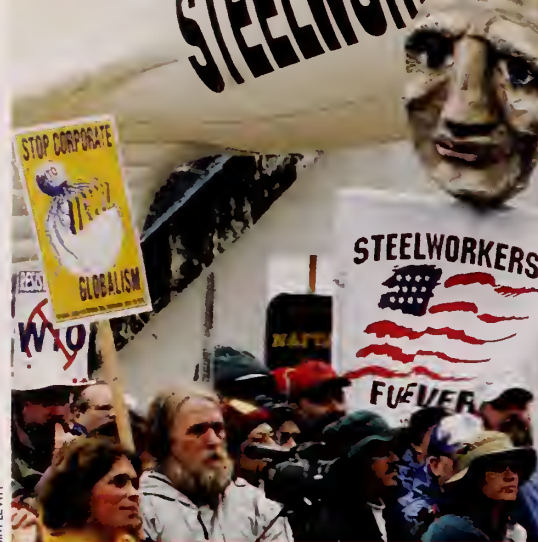
Modeled after the North American Free Trade Agreement, the Free Trade Area of the Americas would eliminate tariffs in every

country in the Western Hemisphere except Cuba—and its passage by 2005 is a top priority of the Bush administration.

Pressuring for quick passage of FTAA, President George W. Bush has asked Congress for Fast Track authority, which Congress rejected in 1997 and 1998. Fast Track would give the president excessive power by eliminating Congress's ability to

improve trade deals—and would mean more American jobs moving overseas and more pollution at home and abroad. The current version of Fast Track is worse than previous bills because it bars including workers' rights or environmental protections in any Fast Tracked agreement.

The FTAA would spread the flaws of NAFTA to the entire hemisphere: NAFTA eliminated 766,030 actual and potential U.S. jobs between 1994 and 2000, says Robert Scott, an international economist with the Economic Policy Institute, and lowered wages in Mexico. In fact, he says,



Where it began: In 1999, more than 30,000 union members and other activists brought globalization issues to light during protests outside WTO meetings in Seattle.

NAFTA also has contributed to rising income inequality, suppressed real wages for production workers and weakened collective bargaining. Manufacturing jobs have been particularly hard hit, with 470,000 jobs lost since the beginning of the year, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

### Debt relief and AIDS

To repay loans from the World Bank and the IMF, developing nations often are required to cut funds for health care, education and other vital services.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, where 70 percent

of the 36 million people infected with HIV/AIDS live, countries spend approximately \$13.5 billion per year repaying debts, just under the \$15 billion the Global AIDS Alliance estimates the region needs to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic each year. The United Nations reports African governments now are spending four times as much repaying international creditors as they spend on basic education and health.

"The pandemic of HIV/AIDS is a threat to the world's economy and to the social structure of many developing countries," says AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer William Lucy, who is vice chairman of the AFL-CIO Executive Council's international affairs committee.

Protests such as Global Justice Week and demonstrations at the FTAA summit in Quebec and at the recent Group of Eight meeting in Genoa, Italy, help build public support for a global economy that works for working people. "The global economy raises fundamental moral issues veiled under the label of free trade," says The Rev. William Monroe Campbell, co-chair of the Ministers Against Global Injustice, an AFL-CIO coalition partner in the fight to stop Fast Track. "If you breathe the air, drink the water, work for a living or care about your family, you have a stake in making the global economy more fair." @



Special honor: AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson presents the 2000 Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award to Oscar Olivera on behalf of the Institute for Policy Studies.

## Join Union Members for Global Justice

As part of the Global Justice Week of Action Sept. 26-Oct. 1, the AFL-CIO, the Metropolitan Washington (D.C.) Labor Council, Jobs with Justice and a coalition of civil rights, environmental and religious groups are co-sponsoring a nonviolent protest to demand the International Monetary Fund and World Bank invest in good jobs and strong communities and cancel debts to poor developing countries.

The marchers also will say "No" to Fast Track and to extending NAFTA through the Free Trade Area of the Americas, and demand that world leaders make treatment for combating HIV/AIDS a top priority.

So that people from many backgrounds, movements and beliefs can work together for these common goals, sponsors of the "Respect Work, Strengthen Family, Build Community" rally are asking all participants to agree not to use violence or physical or verbal abuse toward any person; not to destroy property; not to carry any weapons; and not to bring or use any alcohol or illegal drugs.

Other events scheduled for the Global Justice Week include:

- \* Sept. 25 Immigrant Rights Lobby Day and Rally
- \* Sept. 27-29 Teach-Ins, with a labor panel on Sept. 28
- \* Sept. 28 "Behind the Label" anti-sweatshop action led by UNITE
- \* Sept. 29 Interfaith Service/Candlelight March for Debt Cancellation

Sign up for the Global Justice Week of Action today. Visit [www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy](http://www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy) or call 202-508-6989. @



## Going Global

**F**ind out how you can take part in Global Justice Week—or learn other ways to join in the global effort to build international partnerships and push for the inclusion of workers' rights and environmental protections in trade agreements—with the help of the following resources.



The AFL-CIO's Campaign for Global Fairness website ([www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy](http://www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy)) gives you the tools you need to take action and learn the issues. Log on and:

- Sign up for S30 events, find housing and get updates on the issues behind the massive mobilization set for Sept. 26–Oct. 1 by clicking on “Globalize This.”
- Download PDF fliers, including S30 talking points and background information for distribution at worksites, congregations and rallies.
- Sign a petition to the World Trade Organization supporting basic human rights,

including the right to be free from child labor and the right to join together and bargain collectively.

- Take part in the campaign to post the International Labor Organization's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work by downloading or ordering the ILO poster and requesting a poster action toolkit.
- Join the Working Families E-Activist Network to receive Action Alerts. @

## Reports and Publications

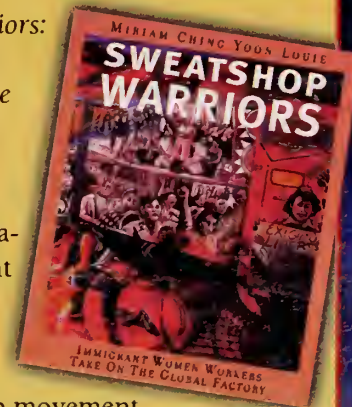
[Books can be ordered on the Web at [www.powells.com](http://www.powells.com), the largest (ILWU) union-staffed bookstore in the nation.]

*The Free Trade Area of the Americas—Expanding NAFTA to the Rest of the Hemisphere* is a new AFL-CIO report examining the harmful effects of the North American Free Trade Agreement on workers and the economy—and how the FTAA would create similar consequences throughout the Western Hemisphere. Download the report online at [www.aflcio.org/global\\_economy](http://www.aflcio.org/global_economy).

In *Sweatshop Warriors*:

*Immigrant Women Workers Take on the Global Factory*, author Miriam Ching Yoon Louie highlights the extraordinary immigrant women worker-activists pioneering the growing U.S. anti-sweatshop movement.

The book examines the practices and policies that propel adults and children into dangerous, low-wage jobs. \$40 hardback, \$18 paperback. South End Press, 800-533-8478.



*China's Workers Under Assault: The Exploitation of Labor in a Globalizing Economy* by Anita Chan lays out the reasons behind ongoing workers' rights violations in China. She debunks the corporate spin that Chinese workers are thriving because the Chinese economy is booming. \$58.95 hardback, \$22.95 paperback. M.E. Sharpe Inc. @

## Stop Sweatshops

**UNITE**  
**www.behindthelabel.org**  
1710 Broadway  
New York, N.Y. 10019  
212-265-7000, ext. 821

UNITE's Stop Sweatshops campaign recently launched a multimedia online community and news site for anti-sweatshop activists. The campaign focuses on the purchasing or licensing of apparel by governments and universities to ensure it was not made under sweatshop conditions. UNITE organizes actively on college campuses and involves members in targeted sweatshop actions.

**United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS)**  
**www.usasnet.org**  
Suite 200, 1015 18th St., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
202-NO-SWEAT

A national coalition of college activists waging anti-sweatshop and code-of-conduct campaigns. The group lobbies



for full disclosure of names and addresses of factories that produce campus apparel.

**National Labor Committee**  
**www.nlcnet.org**  
15th Floor  
275 Seventh Ave.  
New York, N.Y. 10001  
Phone: 212-242-3002

The NLC has organized groundbreaking anti-sweatshop campaigns against Kathie Lee Gifford and Wal-Mart, and coordinates an annual Holiday Season of Conscience encouraging responsible consumption.

**US/Labor Education in the Americas Project**  
**www.usleap.org**  
P.O. Box 268-290  
Chicago, Ill. 60626  
773-262-6502

By focusing on U.S. corporations and trade policy, US/LEAP supports workers' rights throughout Central America. @



# REFUND? WHAT TAX REFUND?

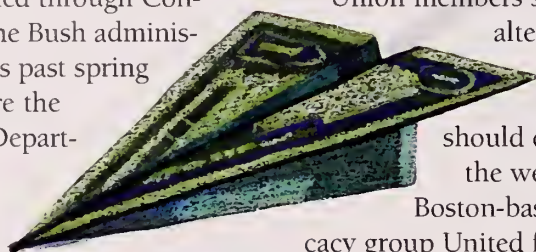
**F**aster than you could say, "The checks in the mail," Big Business launched advertising campaigns to redirect into corporate coffers workers' 2002 tax advances. (Misleadingly called "tax refunds," the advances were pushed through Congress by the Bush administration this past spring and require the Treasury Department to borrow money to cover the cost of the tax cut.)

In July, just as the federal government mailed the checks (up to \$300 to single taxpayers, \$600 for couples—but 26 percent of the public at the lowest end of the income scale get nothing), Wal-Mart began offering a free check-cashing service for the tax checks, clearly hoping the cash wouldn't make it out the door.

As if the tax giveaway to the wealthy wasn't a sufficient waste of public resources, the U.S. Treasury Department spent almost \$34 million, according to Democratic senators, to send

notices trumpeting the checks' impending arrival. That money alone could have funded after-school and summer school programs for 53,860 children or job training for 12,855 adults, according to the Economic Policy Institute.

Union members seeking alternatives for their tax advances should check out the website of Boston-based advocacy group United for a Fair Economy at [www.RejecttheRebate.org](http://www.RejecttheRebate.org), which encourages people to "redirect" their advanced checks to their favorite social-change organizations and sign a petition expressing their opposition to President George W. Bush's tax cut for the wealthy. Meanwhile, an activist in Texas, Tony Adams, posted a website ([www.TaxRebatePledge.org](http://www.TaxRebatePledge.org)) where taxpayers can pledge they will send their tax advances to groups fighting Bush's reactionary agenda. So far, 1,134 people have pledged to donate \$381,561. @



**Dust up:** A "housekeeper" tidies up the limo of "President Bush" as part of street theater action.

# The Great Social Security Heist

**A**s more than 350 workers rallied outside the Washington, D.C., Capitol Hilton to protest efforts by the Bush-appointed Social Security Commission—which was meeting inside—to privatize the nation's most successful public program, they were greeted by a familiar face: The "President." Wearing a George W. Bush mask, an actor joined other street artists, dressed as workers near 70, including a housekeeper who feather-dusted the prez's stretch limo. The action was among 50 around the nation in which workers



slammed the commission's interim report for using scare tactics and half truths to persuade the American people Social Security is in danger of failing and private accounts are the best way to save the system.

Inside the Hilton, the gathering was equally surreal: Commission member and former Rep. Bill Frenzel (R-Minn.), who had spent the duration of the meeting drawing a giant doodle that commission co-chairman Daniel Moynihan held up for members to view, used his comment time to deride the protesters "parading in front of the hotel" and complained the ralliers "used up the whole sidewalk," forcing him to walk in the street. @

# Good Help Is Hard to Find at 3 Cents an Hour

**I**n late July, Nike Inc. recalled 425,000 pairs of Jordan Runner cross-training athletic shoes after six owners reported a metal strip on the shoes' heels had cut them.

The next day, NBC TV's "Tonight Show" host, Jay Leno, used the recall to point out that multinational companies like Nike take advantage of low-wage workers abroad and market their products at top dollar to American consumers.

"It is so hard to find good help at 3 cents an hour," said Leno. "This is what happens. Go to a nickel and you eliminate these problems."

"I bet some kid in Taiwan is going to lose his bathroom break next week."

At the sound of "boos" in the audience, Leno had this to say:

"Oh, yeah, let's kill the messenger while we're at it. We don't want to know. We just like paying \$150 for sneakers." @



## EXHIBIT

"Unseen America," an exhibit of 51 black-and-white photographs, is available for display by unions and other organizations. The exhibit's photographers—low-wage workers, immigrants, homeless people and students—documented their everyday lives after participating in photography work-

shops sponsored by Bread and Roses, the nonprofit cultural project of New York's Health & Human Service Employees Union, 1199/SEIU. Their photographs can be viewed at [www.bread-and-roses.org](http://www.bread-and-roses.org), and will be on display in the AFL-CIO lobby beginning Oct. 9. Bread and Roses helps set up similar displays in other unions by providing a how-to information kit and a CD of the exhibit photos for \$15. For more information, contact Bread and Roses at 212-603-1186 or visit [www.bread-and-roses.org](http://www.bread-and-roses.org).

## PUBLICATIONS

**The Next Agenda: Blueprint for a New Progressive Movement**, edited by Robert L. Borosage and Roger Hickey, offers progressive prescriptions for the economic, political and social dilemmas facing today's working families. Borosage and Hickey are co-founders of the Campaign for America's Future, a center of progressive research, advocacy and education.

\$18. Westview Press. Available at bookstores and online booksellers or ordered via e-mail at [westvieworders@perseusbooks.com](mailto:westvieworders@perseusbooks.com) or by phone at 800-386-5656.

**Living Wage Campaigns: An Activist's Guide to Building the Movement for Economic Justice**, by David Reynolds, provides a step-by-step plan for winning living wage ordinances and profiles campaigns in Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, St. Louis and St. Paul, Minn. Published by the Living Wage

## CELEBRATE THE WORLD'S GREATEST ONLINE LABOR DAY FESTIVAL

Send your favorite activist an e-card, register to vote and e-mail a corporate bad guy at the AFL-CIO Online Labor Day Festival. Accessible through [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org) and [www.workingfamilies.com](http://www.workingfamilies.com), the 2001 bash will celebrate the activism, accomplishments, history, culture—and fun—of working families. Read workers' stories, view photos submitted by union members, scroll through a Jacob Lawrence art exhibit and listen to worker-inspired music from across the United States and around the globe. The online festival debuted at the end of August and runs through September 21. Free downloadable software is available. ☐



## WEBSIGHTINGS

[www.epinet.org](http://www.epinet.org)—An astounding 29 percent of families with one to three children younger than 12 cannot afford basic necessities—two-and-a-half times more families than those that fall below the official federal poverty line, according to the Economic Policy Institute's most recent report, *Hardships in America: The Real Story of Working Families*. Along with the report, the EPI website includes a family budget calculator that generates an itemized budget based on family size and metropolitan area. The basic family budget includes the amount needed to afford food, housing, child care, health insurance, transportation, utilities, taxes and other expenses.

[www.women4socialsecurity.org/sscalc4/calculator.htm](http://www.women4socialsecurity.org/sscalc4/calculator.htm)—The National Council of Women's Organizations website features a Social Security calculator that provides a comparison of Social Security benefits under the current system with a privatized Social Security system in which Social Security benefits are reduced and investments are converted to an annuity at retirement. ☐

## MUSIC

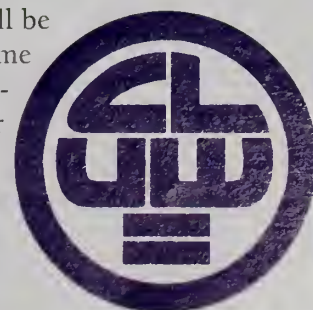
**"I Want to Be Ready When My Time Comes,"**

by Wendell Stone, features five gospel songs plus the instrumental versions of each. Stone, a tenor and SEIU Local 79 business representative in Detroit, is augmented by the background vocals of the Bethel Baptist Church-East Male Chorus. The 53-minute CD is available from Wendell E.W. Stone Production Inc. \$12. To order, phone 313-245-1871 or e-mail [stonewendell@aol.com](mailto:stonewendell@aol.com). ☐



## CLUW CONVENTION IN OCTOBER

The Coalition of Labor Union Women's 11th Biennial Convention will be Oct. 4-7 at the Riviera Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. Under the theme "Designing Our Own Future," convention delegates will examine current workplace challenges facing women seeking to better prepare for the social and economic changes of the 21st century. As at the past two conventions, this convention will feature a Young Women Workers Forum plus a special Technology Conference. For more convention and hotel reservation information, visit CLUW's website at [www.cluw.org](http://www.cluw.org). ☐





## They're back...

Leaders of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund are planning another closed-door meeting this fall in Washington, D.C.

Outside, thousands of union members and religious, environmental and student activists will demand a global economy that works for all people, not just giant corporations.

Through six days of rallies, teach-ins and street action, union activists will:

- Support calls for the IMF and World Bank to unconditionally **cancel the debts owed by the poorest countries to the IMF and World Bank.**
- **Oppose the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA)** agreement aimed at extending the terms of the disastrous North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) throughout the Western Hemisphere.
- **Demand affordable treatment of HIV/AIDS for the world's poorest citizens.**



## Get Involved!

Women's Equality Summit, Congressional Action Day

Sept. 24-25

Immigrant Rights National Day of Action

Sept. 25

Teach-in on the World Bank, the IMF and the global economy

Sept. 27-29

Protest with UNITE over sweatshop conditions

Sept. 28

Demonstrate with HERE for a voice at work

Sept. 28

Interfaith service for debt cancellation and global justice

Sept. 29

Massive march and rally on the Ellipse

Sept. 30

Check [www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy](http://www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy) for updates

### Also planned:

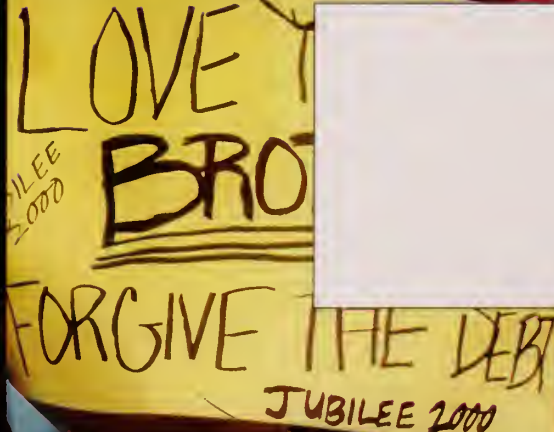
- Preparation for the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions day of action Nov. 9 around the World Trade Organization meeting in Qatar.

# Sign up for a Week of

# Global Justice!

## Sept. 26-Oct. 1 Washington, D.C.

- ▶ Sign up for the Global Justice Week of Action today. Visit [www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy](http://www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy) or call 202-637-5280





Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

OCTOBER 2001

# America @work

## American Tragedy

# Union Heroes

ALSO INSIDE:

**Stemming the  
Second Wave**

**Opening Doors  
and Breaking  
Barriers**

**Ergonomics  
Follies**



**"IT IS WITH** a heavy heart that I write this note to offer my condolences to all of the families of the victims of this tragedy. With no thought of their own safety, firefighters, medical personnel, police officers and ordinary citizens rushed into harm's way to bring aid and assistance to their fellow human beings. Many of those people, not surprisingly, are men and women of the labor movement—people who live every day with the knowledge that the only way out of the pits of despair is to be united together in one cause."—Barry Lynn Beattie, president, IAM Local Lodge 2061, Port St. John, Fla.

### SAY WHAT?

#### How did your union respond to the Sept. 11 tragedy?

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's Say What? Selected responses will appear in a future issue. [America@work](mailto:America@work), 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; phone: 202-637-5010; fax: 202-508-6908; e-mail: [atwork@afcio.org](mailto:atwork@afcio.org).

### HERE'S WHAT YOU SAY

#### ABOUT HOW YOUR UNION HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN MULTI-UNION ORGANIZING:

"Last year, Steelworkers District 1 and Teamsters Local 377 agreed that we would begin a joint organizing campaign [at the McDonald Steel Corporation in McDonald, Ohio]. The company objected to the joint representation and tried every means possible to block the election, but the workers and the two unions stood side by side, working to organize the plant. Eventually, the union prevailed [and] in April 2001, the two unions were certified as the collective bargaining agents....The unions are working closely together because they believe...we must be creative and innovative to best represent all working people."—Patrick Gallagher, area organizing coordinator, USWA District 1, and Rick Kepler, organizer, Teamsters Local 377

**"I HAVE NEVER** been more proud to be a union member than I am now. As I look at those union firemen, police, steelworkers, etc., on that pile of rubble [at the site of the New York City terrorist attack], I think: They are all union. We should point this out to the nation in some appropriate way. I am a Teamster, but believe that the president of the AFL-CIO should make a presence at the site."

—Brian Meany, steward, Teamsters Local 1149, Liverpool, N.Y.

Editor's note: AFL-CIO President John Sweeney spent two days in New York City meeting with rescue and relief workers in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attack. His visit and union members' response to the tragedy, are covered in stories and photographs on pages 7-21.

Editor's note: The following are among the more than 3,000 letters received by the AFL-CIO from unions and labor federations around the world in sympathy and support for American workers.

**"COSATU AND ITS** 2 million members and indeed all South African workers and people are with you...at this difficult moment. No cause can be served through indiscriminate attacks on unarmed ordinary citizens."—Zwelinzima Vavi, general secretary, COSATU

**"FOR ME, IT** is an urgent matter of concern to tell you that I myself and the German trade unions share feelings of consternation and grief with the American people. In our thoughts, we are with you in these difficult hours..."—Dieter Schulte, president, Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund [national federation of trade unions], Germany

AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in [America@work](mailto:America@work).



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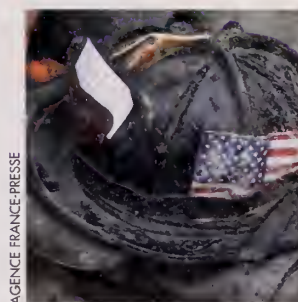
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Two AFL-CIO programs enable law students to get hands-on experience with union organizing, network with each other and receive career advice from veteran labor lawyers



## FIGHTING CHILD LABOR IN NEW YORK

Following a three-year campaign by anti-sweatshop activists, school districts in New York State have a new tool to fight child labor. Over Labor Day weekend, Gov. George Pataki (R) signed into law a bill allowing school districts to reject manufacturers that use sweatshops or child labor to produce school apparel such as uniforms and gym clothes.

New York State United Teachers, an AFT affiliate, and the New York State Labor-Religion Coalition spearheaded the effort, which allows local school boards to consider labor standards—including pay, working conditions, the right to join a union and the use of child labor—when buying school apparel. Previously, districts had to accept the lowest bid. Unions and allies rallied legislators with letters, petitions and visits to elected officials. ☐

NEW YORK STATE LABOR-RELIGION COALITION



**No sweat:** Brian O'Shaughnessy, director of the New York State Labor-Religion Coalition.

## CEO Pay Soars as Workers Lose Jobs

Even before the Sept. 11 tragedy, job loss was rising significantly in the United States, even as workers put in more hours on the job. Yet chief executive officers continued to make excessive personal profits.

*Executive Excess 2001: Lay-offs, Tax Rebates and the Gender Gap, Eighth Annual CEO Compensation Survey*, shows how CEOs raked in salary and bonus hikes of nearly 20 percent in 2000, compared with average raises of about 3 percent for hourly workers and 4 percent for salaried employees. The report, released Aug. 28 by United for a Fair Economy and the Institute for Policy Studies, finds that CEOs who laid off workers got heftier pay

hikes than those who didn't.

And U.S. workers put in the most hours on the job of any workforce in the developed world, according to an International Labor Organization study released Aug. 31. Working long hours may be one reason 90 percent of respondents to a Peter Hart Research poll conducted for the AFL-CIO said that time off to care for family members and sick days for themselves are important rights, while 87 percent said a living wage and protecting overtime pay for more than 40 hours a week are both priorities.

Meanwhile, an Associated Press poll of 1,010 people released Aug. 30 found that 50 percent of respondents are sympathetic to unions in labor disputes, with 27 percent sympathetic to management. Two years ago, the breakdown was 45 percent for unions and 37 percent for management. ☐



## MAKING THE GRADE Through Union Bargaining

Claudia Muñoz wants to be a science teacher, so she plans to major in biochemistry at the University of California at Santa Barbara, where she just began her freshman year. Many college-bound students know getting into UC is not easy, but Muñoz got a boost from her father's union, Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 2 in San Francisco. The union's innovative child- and elder-care fund recently began offering SAT preparation classes. Muñoz took the course—which helped catapult her math score by 100 points.

"It's cool," says Muñoz of Local 2's program. "Those

classes are really expensive and I wouldn't have taken the class without the union's help." Five years ago, the union negotiated a subsidy program funded by the city's 37 union hotels to help offset workers' costs for child care and elder care. The program gradually has added funding for more services, including the SAT prep class.

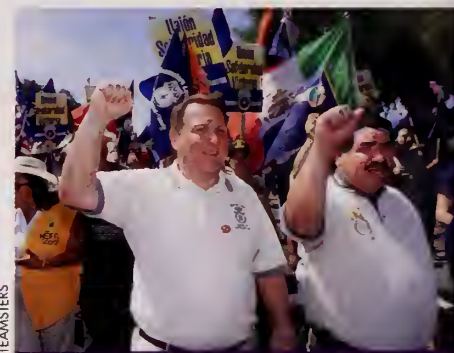
Muñoz, whose father is a dishwasher at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, is one of several children of Local 2 members—housekeepers, cooks and other workers who help San Francisco's tourism industry thrive—accepted to top state universities thanks in part to the class. ☐

## Two-Year Strike Ends in Victory for Teamsters

More than 600 Teamsters Local 890 members had something special to celebrate on Labor Day—a return to their jobs at Basic Vegetable Products in King City, Calif., with a new, strong contract and the end of a two-year strike.

"Today we honor the labor of our brothers and sisters at Basic Vegetable," said IBT President James Hoffa after he led the workers and some 1,500 more family and community members to plant gates. The new five-year agreement returns the workers to their jobs with full seniority and provides for wage and benefit improvements.

In 1999, workers rejected a massive concessionary contract and voted to strike. In response, Basic Vegetable brought in 600 replacement workers. But through a cooperative strategy involving



**Teamwork:** Teamsters President James P. Hoffa (front, left) celebrates with workers at Basic Vegetable.

workers, the union and the community, workers at Basic, a subsidiary of the agribusiness giant Con-Agra, stood strong until victory.

Through the AFL-CIO, the Council of Con-Agra Unions—representing 37,000 members in 14 unions—was formed to map out strategies for supporting the striking workers. ☐



## SPOTLIGHT

# UAW Wheels in Victory With Community Support

When management at Saint-Gobain/Norton Company, which manufactures abrasive grinding wheels in Worcester, Mass., began eroding benefits and laying off workers without regard to seniority, workers took steps to get a voice at work. "They kept taking benefits away," says Bill Ernst, a 29-year veteran of the company and a kiln coordinator. "We had to put a stop to it." On Aug. 24, a majority of 840 manufacturing workers at the company voted for a voice on the job with UAW Region 9A.

The Central Massachusetts AFL-CIO helped UAW organizers mobilize support from the state and congressional delegations, many of whom signed a letter supporting the workers and came to rallies. In addition, Rep. James McGovern (D-Mass.) wrote a letter to the workers—and inadvertently played a part in a novel corporate anti-union tactic. The company, which attempted to deny workers the right to speak out in favor of the union, filed objections to the election with the National Labor Relations Board alleging that McGovern's expression of support for organizing violated federal labor law.

The workers see the objections as an insulting delaying tactic. "What Jim McGovern did was super," says Ernst, one of 147 workers on the organizing committee. "He spoke his mind. He can express his opinion. This is America." Ernst says McGovern's letter was an especially important boost to workers' morale because of the congressman's deep ties to the community.

"It's bad enough that Saint-Gobain/Norton management has repeatedly tried to threaten, coerce and intimidate its own workforce, but every citizen should be especially concerned about the efforts by any company to chill the speech of a duly elected representative," says Phil Wheeler, UAW Region 9A director.

Saint-Gobain/Norton's NLRB election objections won't intimidate workers who seek support from elected officials, union leaders say. "During elections, you have to make sure elected officials see that part of their role is to be a leader in the community," says central labor council President Joe Carlson. "And that means standing up with working people, including during organizing drives." @



**Voice@work:** Delta flight attendants, seeking to join the Flight Attendants, rallied in Washington, D.C., at the start of a major organizing effort among the 20,000 workers.

## Delta Flight Attendants Seek to Join Union Family

A five-year grassroots education campaign by flight attendants at Delta Airlines reached a milestone in September, when the National Mediation Board certified enough signatures on union authorization cards to trigger an election for a voice at work for the carrier's 20,000 attendants. Worker layoffs in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks—estimated at 13,000 across Delta staff—make winning a voice at work more urgent than ever.

"Delta flight attendants have stood together to say we have a right to a voice on the job. We have the right to representation. We have a right to a legally binding contract and we intend to exercise those rights," said Milly Hastings, a 33-year veteran of Delta.

She spoke before a cheering crowd of 300 flight attendants and supporters at a downtown Washington, D.C., rally the same day a group of Delta attendants submitted to the NMB the cards from workers who wish to join the Flight Attendants.

"It's time for the Delta family to become part of the union family," AFA International President Patricia Friend said at the rally.

While flight attendants plan to work hard before the election "making calls, holding meetings, getting out the vote, Delta management also will be working to deprive us of our right to form a union," Delta attendant Joan Harvey said at the rally.

Delta has waged a massive anti-union campaign that includes forced, closed-door, one-on-one interrogations of union supporters; telephoning flight attendants at home and challenging their pro-union stance; and disciplining attendants for matters arising out of their union activities, workers say.

On Sept. 6, AFA formally filed those charges with the NMB, claiming Delta has violated the Railway Labor Act, which governs union elections in the airline industry. After the NMB rules on those charges, it will set an election date. @



**Bear hug:** Workers at Saint-Gobain/Norton celebrate their victory in gaining a voice at work with UAW.



# Guatemala Textile Workers Need Support

Some 1,200 textile workers at two factories in Guatemala won union recognition this summer—a victory that makes the mostly female workforce the first unionized maquila workers in the country. But since then, as workers at the Korean-owned ChoiShin and Cimatextile corporate factories struggle to get a contract, they have been threatened with loss of their jobs—and even their lives—according to the U.S./Labor Education in the Americas Project.

In July, union supporters were attacked by a management-instigated mob that

wielded rocks, bottles and other makeshift weapons in an assault that lasted for hours, according to U.S./LEAP. The workers, who make clothes for Liz Claiborne Co., received international support through a letter-writing and e-mail campaign to the company—and within two weeks, Liz Claiborne issued a letter to the factory owners affirming workers' freedom to join a union. But although the union, factory owners and Guatemala's labor minister signed an agreement stating plant management will respect workers' right to orga-

nize, union leaders say management continues to intimidate workers—who are followed home, moved to lower-paying jobs and threatened with death if they support the union.

"While we appreciate what Liz Claiborne has done, both Liz Claiborne and the Guatemala government need to keep pressing the contractor to abide by the agreement, punish those who are responsible for the violence and harassment and respect the union," says Steve Coats, U.S./LEAP executive director. Among the workers at the plants: Gloria Cordova, a single mother who is paid \$78

every two weeks for a work-week that includes 10-hour days and Saturdays (see "Global Lessons in Guatemala," August America@work).

"It's clear that organizing will not take place at the industry level alone," says Charles Kernaghan, executive director of the National Labor Committee, a workers' rights organization. "There has to be simultaneous pressure in the marketplace."

Show support for the textile workers by contacting Liz Claiborne Chief Executive Officer Paul Charron at 212-354-4900 or by e-mail at [www.lizclaiborne.com/lizinc/lizworks/workers/contact.asp](http://www.lizclaiborne.com/lizinc/lizworks/workers/contact.asp). @

## 13 MINE WORKERS KILLED IN ALABAMA

In the nation's worst coal mine disaster since 1984, 13 miners were killed in what safety officials say were two methane gas explosions more than 2,100 feet underground in Brookwood, Ala., Sept. 12. Ten of the dead Mine Workers Local 2368 members were part of an impromptu rescue crew that rushed in to try to rescue victims of the initial explosion, only to be caught by a second methane burst. They were not members of the mine's rescue team—which was on its way to the mine—or equipped with special rescue and breathing gear, but co-workers on the same Sunday shift, UMWA officials said.

"They're really heroes. These miners did what they instinctively do every day on the job: watch out for their fellow miners," says UMWA President Cecil Roberts.

At a special memorial service at the Brookwood High School football field Sept. 28, Labor Secretary Elaine Chao likened the rescuers' bravery to that of the firefighters, police officers and others who perished trying to save lives following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"Whether they are firefighters in New York, or coal miners from Brookwood, American heroes are people who carry out extraordinary acts with extraordinary courage," she said.

While the Jim Walters Resources No. 5 mine is known for its high methane levels, Roberts says, a cause cannot be determined until the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration completes its investigation. Methane is a highly explosive gas that, when ignited, can travel at 900 feet per second and reach temperatures as high as 2,500 degrees Fahrenheit.

In 1984, 27 coal miners were killed in a fire at a Wilberg, Utah, mine. @

## Organizing First

Stepping up their commitment to helping more workers win a voice on the job, 1,200 AFSCME activists came together in Los Angeles for the union's first-ever organizing convention.

"We must marshal all our union's resources—our political power, our bargaining strength, our members and our financial resources—to grow our union," AFSCME president Gerald McEntee told participants at the Sept. 7-9 event.

Participants learned new skills at workshops on such nuts-and-bolts issues as making house calls, and they held a town-hall-style meeting to discuss employer hostility and other challenges to organizing. Donning AFSCME-green T-shirts, they marched in support of 2,000 part-time workers at the L.A. City Department of Recreation and Parks who recently organized with District Council 36 and are trying to negotiate a first contract.

The rally and workshops energized the activists to make a stronger connection between politics and organizing. "We have to look for opportunities to use AFSCME's renowned political and legislative strength to win new opportunities for workers to organize," says Kevin Haugh, a member of Local 3299 at the University of California, Berkeley's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. @



Mobilized: AFSCME President Gerald McEntee (second from right) joins AFSCME participants in the union's first-ever organizing convention.



# Janitors Win Ford Foundation Awards



SEIU LOCAL 1877

The prestigious Ford Foundation granted a four-member team of janitor-activists from SEIU Local 1877 in Los Angeles one of its new “Leadership for a Changing World” awards in September. The \$130,000 prize goes for the efforts of Marisela Salinas, Dolores Martinez, Rafael Ventura and Kamilo Rivera Lizama (above), who were strike captains during the local’s successful citywide janitors’ strike last

year. The foundation created the award to recognize those who are “getting results tackling tough social problems.”

The award includes a \$100,000 grant for a new Justice for Janitors Training Institute in Los Angeles and \$30,000 to strengthen individual skills and support other future activities. Judges granted awards to 20 individuals and teams from among more than 3,000 nominees. The union plans to use the money to open a computer lab where members can learn English and high-tech skills and to launch leadership development programs. “I hope this will help us grow the union and move forward, organizing more workers, with more leaders,” says Salinas, one of the winners. ☐

## OUT FRONT

A week after terrorists murdered thousands of working men and women Sept. 11, I visited New York. I met with courageous relief workers, grieving firefighters, tireless hospital workers, devastated patients. It was the worst and most painful two days of my life. But what has seen me through the ensuing weeks is knowing that the scale of our loss has been matched by the scale of our goodness. The horror of the attacks has been matched by the courage of thousands of working heroes and heroines who raced to rescue scenes and who gave blood and financial support in communities across the country.

Now it’s time to honor the living.

The U.S. Senate acted shamefully in refusing aid to aviation workers suffering the second wave of the terrorists’ attack—the massive layoffs leaving hundreds of thousands of workers without the means to support their families. We must reverse that action and demand that workers are not left behind in our economic recovery. We can’t permit industry rescue operations that support CEOs and investors but leave workers without the jobs that support their families—or bow to spending stimulus plans that further reward the wealthy at the expense of working families. Refueling this economy will require attacking the toll of massive layoffs devastating working families financially and emotionally.

We also can urge leaders to re-examine policies designed to hurt workers economically—such as trade policies that turn good jobs in this country into exploitive, abusive work overseas. Hundreds of thousands of U.S. flags that wave in our new surge of patriotism have been made by low-wage Chinese workers. “No one around the world can really compete with us as flag makers,” boasted the director of a Chinese flag company to the *Washington Post* last month. “We have good machines and rock-bottom labor costs.”

Then we can listen to the workers who know best about many aspects of protection against terrorism. Who knows better than a pilot or a flight attendant how to protect an aircraft from deadly assault?

Next, we can adamantly resist hateful backlash based on faith or region of origin—in our communities, in our workplaces and in national policy. We must fight every move to divide us or pit worker against worker.

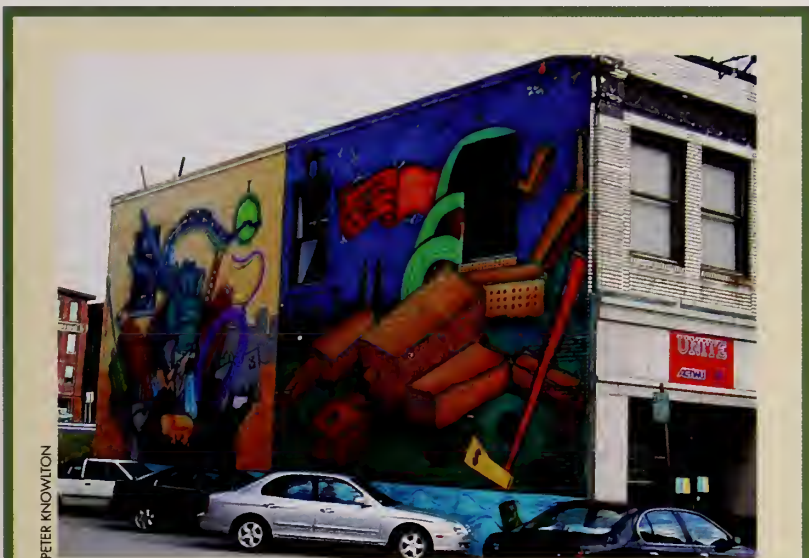
And we can look to our past for heartening reminders of how we have recovered from periods of pain and grown stronger as Americans and as a union movement. From war and Depression, we emerged to build a bountiful economy and reinforce the world’s finest democracy.

Finally, let’s keep the solidarity we demonstrated in the tragedy’s immediate aftermath alive, using it to rekindle our national community. That, after all, is what our unions are all about. ☐

## Mourn for the Dead, Honor the Living



BY JOHN J. SWEENEY



PETER KNOWLTON

## Art History

A new mural on the union hall of UNITE’s New England Joint Board’s Fall River-New Bedford District shows the city’s working history from its blue-collar roots to today’s working environments. One side darkly depicts an abandoned mill—a symbol of corporate abandonment afflicting Massachusetts’ Fall River, a once heavily industrialized city. The other half colorfully displays symbols of the goods and services produced there now. “The mural says that despite what’s happened here, a lot of creative work and energy is still happening,” says district manager Jerry Fishbein. University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth union educator and AFT Local 1895 member Kim Wilson spearheaded the mural because of her interest in local union history. The mural was painted by Mike Alewitz, artistic director of the Labor Art and Mural Project and a member of United Scenic Artists Local 829, Theatrical Stage Employees. ☐

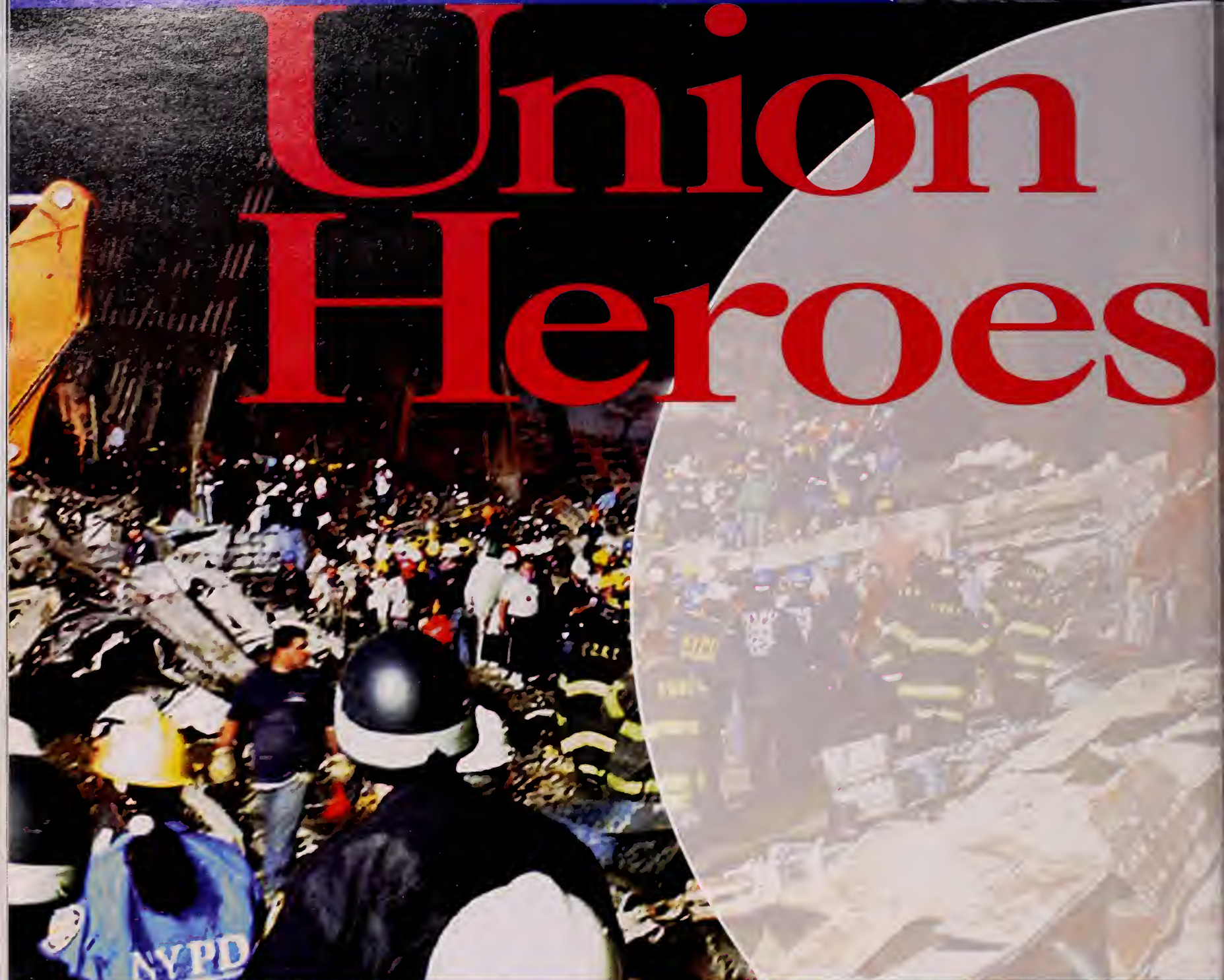


# American Tragedy

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE



# Union Heroes



From firefighters to nurses, ironworkers to seafarers, the men and women who rescued the victims of Sept. 11, cared for the wounded and went about the business of mending a broken nation showed what it means to be an American—and what it means to be a union member.

MICHAEL WEISBROT





As the nation looked skyward Sept. 11, the autumn-blue heavens filled with horror. Within moments of the three airplane collisions to the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon outside Washington, D.C., and a fourth plane crash in the fields of western Pennsylvania, thousands of lives were taken. Lost in the destruction: a restaurant worker's dream of a good life, a flight attendant's chance to see her children grow, the music from a pilot's guitar. Yet seconds after the initial catastrophic crash, rescue workers—disregarding personal safety—were on the scene. From those first moments and throughout the long and chaotic days that followed, countless stories have emerged of selfless courage and tireless struggle: The sacrifice of firefighters, 33 of whom lost their lives. The round-the-clock care of wounded victims by nurses, doctors and medical technicians. The relief efforts by food and restaurant workers and the thousands of building and construction trades crews, steelworkers, transport workers, Teamsters, seafarers and mariners who traveled from around the country to move 1.2 million tons of debris from New York City and more from Washington, D.C. The story of America's tragedy is shown in the collective effort of workers who share a common bond—a union bond. When the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Red Cross needed immediate mobilization of skilled workers, they called the nation's unions for help. When citizens around the country witnessed the onstop efforts of workers shoring up cities, caring for the sick and beginning the process of mending a wounded nation, all eyes were on the men and women of America's unions. For each of the stories on the following pages, there are hundreds more examples of workers who demonstrated what it means to be a union member—what it means to be an American.



TODD MAISEL/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS



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## ALPA Pilots

### Capt. Victor Saracini



COURTESY SARACINI FAMILY

Capt. Victor Saracini, 51, of Lower Makefield Township, Pa., traveled millions of miles piloting United Airlines passenger jets. Friends say that on many flights, Saracini made sure his cherished guitar was beside him in the cockpit.

On Sept. 11, Saracini, First Officer Michael Horrocks, seven members of the Flight Attendants and the 56 passengers on United Flight 175 from Boston to Los Angeles were hijacked by terrorists, who authorities suspect killed or incapacitated the flight crew before crashing the Boeing 767 into the south tower of the World Trade Center.

Saracini and Horrocks are among four ALPA pilots and four members

of the nonaffiliated Allied Pilots Association killed on duty that day.

Left behind are Saracini's wife, Ellen; daughters Kirsten and Brielle; and many friends, including former flight school classmate Jack Schachtman.

"Vic served, to those of us who knew him, as a symbol of where hard work and determination can lead," says Schachtman, describing Saracini as a man who worked his way up to Navy Aviation Officer Candidate School years after dropping out of high school.

Saracini ultimately became "a proud ALPA member," says Frank Lyons, a friend and United pilot co-worker. Saracini's big break as a pilot came in 1985 after he applied for a job at United. That year, when ALPA members went on strike, the airline notified 574 pilots on its applicants list they would get the striking pilots' jobs if they crossed the picket lines. Saracini and 569 other pilots refused and became known as the "United 570." He was hired by United after the strike.

On Aug. 29, the day Saracini celebrated his 51st birthday, 13-year-old Kirsten wrote her father a poem, "Years Gone By," which ends with these lines:

"And for all the years that come, I know one thing will never change,  
You will always be my daddy and I will always feel the same. I love you." @

## Flight Attendants

### CeeCee Lyles

A police officer in her hometown of Fort Pierce, Fla., before taking to the skies as a United flight attendant, CeeCee Lyles "liked dealing with people, and always wanted to travel," recalls her husband, Lorne, a Fort Myers, Fla., patrol officer who also grew up in Fort Pierce.

The couple met at work and married in May 2000, each bringing two sons to the new family. "We were going to renew our vows next year," Lyles says. "When she was gone, it was like she was here, with our cell phones glued to our heads."

It was that cell phone that CeeCee Lyles, 33, used to call her husband one last time while on United Flight 93, which was hijacked Sept. 11 and crashed in western Pennsylvania. At first Lyles thought she was joking when she told him the plane had been hijacked. Then he knew she wasn't. She affirmed her love for him and the boys.

Dying on the job—as a police officer or flight attendant—was something the couple never discussed. But now Lyles feels he could stand his loss more easily if his wife had not died in a terrorist attack.

"I'd just like for the U.S. government to bring those who are responsible to justice," says Lyles, who cannot bring himself to drive the family vehicles because of the memories they hold. "I have gone from planning our future to living day to day, and that is difficult."

CeeCee Lyles was one of 26 flight attendants—13 United Airlines employees who were members of the Flight Attendants and 13 American Airlines workers who belonged to the nonaffiliated Association of Professional Flight Attendants—who died doing their jobs during the Sept. 11 attacks. @



LYLES FAMILY PHOTO COURTESY FORT PIERCE (FLA.) POLICE DEPARTMENT



HERE LOCAL 100

## Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees

### Gilbert Ruiz Sr., Abdoul Karim Traore and Juan Nieves Jr.

Soaring above Manhattan, the Windows on the World restaurant atop the World Trade Center offered patrons one of the world's most spectacular views, while providing workers, many of whom came from other countries, a chance at a better life. As they cooked, set up tables and prepared the restaurant for a corporate breakfast Sept. 11, 43 members of Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 100 perished in the attack on the twin towers. Among them (from left): Gilbert Ruiz Sr., Abdoul Karim Traore and Juan Nieves Jr., all union shop stewards (pictured here at a Feb. 2000 rally in support of cafeteria workers organizing at Goldman Sachs).

The pony-tailed Ruiz, 45, was a passionate advocate for co-workers. Co-worker Asmat Ali says during contract negotiations, "Gilbert told the owner that some managers were treating the workers like slaves. This really affected the owner, who said he wanted to improve the relationship. Gilbert was not only outspoken, but effective."

An Ivory Coast native, Traore was a banquet chef who impressed his co-workers with his humility. Ali remembers him as "a faithful Muslim" who took seriously the requirement to pray five times a day. He would find a quiet spot in one of the restaurant's unused rooms, lower himself to his knees, press his forehead to the ground and acknowledge God's oneness and centrality in the universe.

Nieves liked classic cars, says co-worker Ruben Tabares. The 56-year-old cook drove a 1968 Mustang and occasionally would give it a new coat of paint.

Nieves wasn't handy under the hood, so Tabares offered to make easy repairs. "But we never got around to it," says Tabares. "We always meant to get together and compare our cars, but we never did." @



*“While I was at Ground Zero, I was surrounded by people—firefighters, welders, EMTs, police officers—with the same mission, so I never felt alone.”*

—Dr. Toko Morimoto,  
CIR/SEIU member

## American Tragedy Union Heroes



**Committee of Interns and Residents/SEIU**

### Dr. Toko Morimoto

#### Iron Workers

### Kevin O'Rourke, Bob Benesh and Dennis Milton

(Not pictured)

In 1969, Kevin O'Rourke was an apprentice Iron Worker, learning his craft by helping build the World Trade Center's twin towers that for more than a quarter of a century dominated the New York City skyline.

On Sept. 12, O'Rourke, a member of Iron Workers Local 40, was crawling under the rubble of the collapsed pedestrian bridge that had connected the two 110-story towers, trying to calculate the best way to lift the twisted iron and tons of rubble and maybe, just maybe, find someone alive.

That same day, Bob Benesh, a business agent for Iron Workers Local 580 in New York, was digging through the rubble near the collapsed Marriott Hotel, shoulder-to-shoulder with about 40 other rescue workers. He said he heard a cry from someone: “She’s alive.”

On Sept. 11, Dr. Toko Morimoto worked her regular schedule at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center, located miles north of the disaster area, from 1 p.m. until her shift ended the next morning, when she volunteered at the site of the World Trade Center disaster.

“I was determined to go to the World Trade Center. I showed my ID to the police officers and told them that I am to be at the scene to help out the medical site there. I was led to Stuyvesant High School, about three blocks away from Ground Zero, where there was a major medical treatment area. I was given a respirator mask and goggles.

“Outside, it was a gorgeous day. Inside, it was dark. Dust and soot and smoke covered the area—shutting off any sunlight. All of a sudden, I had slipped into a war zone. It just did not look nor feel real. I was hyperventilating and scared, underneath my goggles and mask.

“Once I scoped out the whole Ground

“I couldn't believe it. Her eyes were open. She didn't say a word. But she was alive,” Benesh said.

Carefully, emergency medical technicians and rescue workers removed the last survivor of the Sept. 11 terrorist attack that claimed more than 6,000 lives.

Members of the Iron Workers, first from New York and soon from around the country, played a key role in rescue and recovery efforts. Trained in skills to build sturdy buildings, the hundreds of Iron Workers volunteers put those same skills to use to begin clearing 1.2 million tons of concrete and steel quickly and safely.

“I can't tell you how proud I am about the way our members responded,” says Iron Workers President Joe Hunt. “They were some of the first people on the scene and I know they weren't thinking about it, but they were risking their lives too.” Thousands of Iron Workers signed up on a national waiting list of volunteers.

“We'd clear a small area by cutting the steel columns in parts and moving them out with a crane. That would allow police and firefighters to search for survivors and the dead,” says

Zero area, I was able to regain my focus by remembering my mission: I am here to provide medical care. I didn't have time to be scared.

“Originally, I hoped to help a survivor. I walked in the rubble with firefighters hoping to hear ‘There's a person alive here!’ However, I only heard, ‘There's a body.’ I realized my role was to help firefighters who get injured—though I never stopped hoping for a survivor.

“While I was at Ground Zero, I was surrounded by people—firefighters, welders, EMTs, police officers—with the same mission, so I never felt alone. People would pass by me, tap on my shoulder and say, ‘Thank you for being here.’ I felt the strength and warmth of what America is all about. Never have I felt, seen and been surrounded by such enormous compassion, and never have I felt so proud to be a part of this country.” ☐



ALAN SAEY/TWU LOCAL 100

Local 580 Business Agent Dennis Milton, who also worked on the towers in the early 1970s.

“You have to be very careful when you start pulling this [debris] out. It was great that there were so many volunteers, but when it comes to the hairy stuff, you've got to have the experienced people,” Walsh says. “We want to get the job done and we know how to do it.”

Someday, Walsh says, all of New York City's Iron Workers will go back to building buildings again. ☐



# Fire Fighters

Lives  
on the  
Line



CORBIS



## Firefighters know what it's like to risk their lives at work—that is their job.

And in New York City, where firefighters rushed to rescue those trapped inside the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 343 firefighters made the ultimate sacrifice. That morning, more than 1,000 children and hundreds of spouses said good-bye to their fathers, husbands and partners for the last time.

"I came in from home when I heard the call," says Fire Fighters member Kevin Cahill (left). "I just wanted to get down there as soon as possible to see what I could do to help."

Cahill, who works out of Engine Co. 14 in Union Square, and the other firefighters responding to the call for assistance knew the death toll could be high. The attacks on the buildings had taken place during the regular morning shift change, and two shifts of firefighters had headed to the scene.

"It was like a war zone," Cahill says.

MICHELLE FRANKFURTER





AP PHOTO/DAVID ZALUBOWSKI

"If anything epitomizes the word 'solidarity,' go down to that rubble pile and watch the members of the AFL-CIO working together.

"I can't tell you how grateful the Fire Fighters are, particularly to the Iron Workers and the Operating Engineers. Our jobs would be absolutely impossible without those heroes down on that job site putting their lives on the line, putting themselves in harm's way, moving rubble so our people can attempt their search-and-rescue operation. It's really what this labor movement is all about."

—Fire Fighters President Harold Schaitberger

The collapse of the twin towers decimated the top ranks of the Fire Department of New York. The IAFF estimates 40 percent of the department's command structure was killed, along with most of the members of

55 fire companies. The death toll—343—is more than four times the number of firefighters killed across the nation in 2000, and more than the number of firefighters killed in New York City for the past 100 years, according to George Burke, assistant to IAFF President Harold Schaitberger.

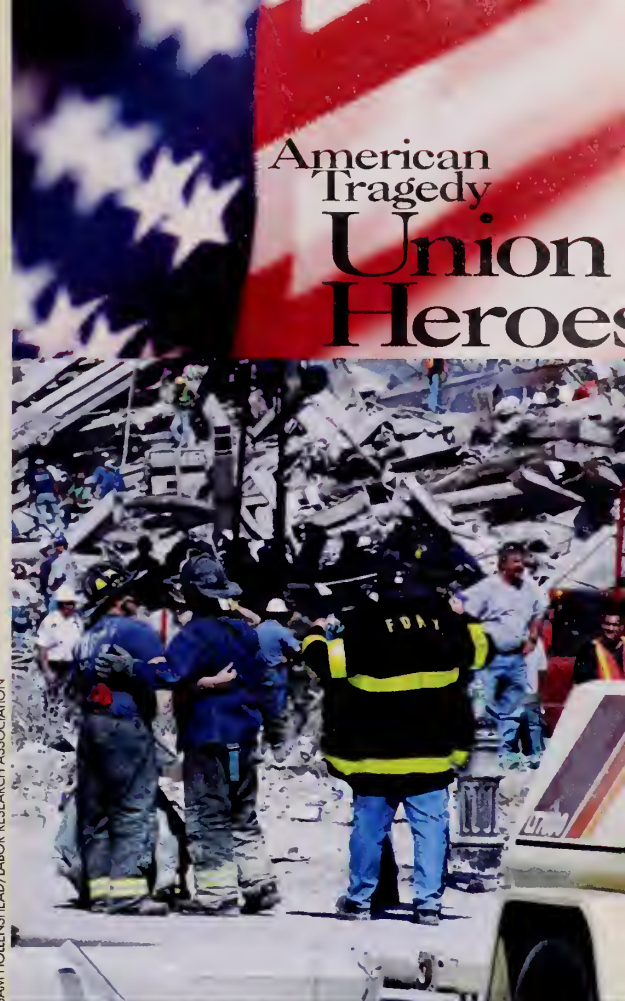
During their rescue efforts, many firefighters were injured as they combed through the rubble searching for bodies. Some fell into spaces created by shifting steel girders or simply collapsed from the exhaustion of working without stopping.

Responding to the crisis, union members from across the country volunteered their skills.

"Union members are doing it—they're down there," Cahill says. "You see uniforms from Chicago, Los Angeles, everywhere. There are ironworkers down there trying to break up the steel so we can find our brothers and sisters."

"I have this image in my head of all the guys I knew," he says. "A lot of them are down there [in the rubble]. The thought of not seeing them again is tough. Our firehouse was lucky—we have all our guys, but houses all around us lost. There were a lot of good friends, a lot of good guys." ■

Contributors to these pages include America@work staff members Jane Birnbaum, Mike Hall, Lauren Lazarovici and James Parks; AFL-CIO Working for America Institute Communications Director Mike Kiernan; Abernathy and Anderson associate Jeffrey Lerner; and Patricia Westwater of Westwater Productions.



SAM HOLLENSHEAD/LABOR RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

## 'There Was No Color to Anything'

"The scene changes from day to day," says Dennis Smith, retired firefighter and author of the best-selling *Report from Engine Co. 82*. Smith traveled to the site for days after the attack.

"The first day there was a surreal quality to the destruction. Concrete and plaster dust were on everything. There was no color to anything. It looked like a black-and-white picture, all shades of gray. First there is a little concrete dust, like powdered soft sand, and then suddenly every step kicks up a cloud. There is paper debris everywhere, strewn between window casings, air conditioner grates and large chunks of what had once been among the tallest structures in the world."

There was so much rubble, Smith says, he couldn't fathom where rescuers could begin to work. But backed by the skill of union members who came to help, rescuers were able to start searching for bodies. The ironworkers, firefighters and emergency medical workers worked non-stop, "never giving a thought to anything except getting to the survivors," he says.

The workers' heroic response to the tragedy has made him question the nation's priorities, Smith says. "Why do we pay a 35-year-old firefighter with two kids \$50,000 while we pay a 25-year-old stockbroker \$200,000 just for talking on the phone and giving people financial advice? Something is wrong." ■







**NY State Nurses Association/  
United American Nurses**

## Joyce Buffolino, RN

Joyce Buffolino, head nurse for adult emergency services at New York Bellevue Hospital Center, says when she first heard the World Trade Center was hit, "very quickly things started to escalate. We started putting emergency plans into effect. We were thinking mass trauma, sadly, because of the nature of the collapse" and because Bellevue is the fourth-closest hospital to south Manhattan.

"The first patient by ambulance was a firefighter who was hit by a person falling from one of the buildings. The firefighter kept repeating, 'They never thought it was going to collapse,'" she says. "To see the pain in his eyes...." Buffolino says, her voice trailing off.

"Before he came in, we were already making up our own scenarios. But people falling from buildings? No, you couldn't think up that scenario."

While hospital staff ultimately treated 276 victims, compared with 150 following the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, Buffolino says workers had "geared up for mass trauma—and it never happened."

"We were all ready. There was nobody to help—we weren't getting the people we thought we would get. We were overwhelmed with doctors and nurses, but not with people from the World Trade Center—and that was the sad realization." ☐

## Laborers

## Pat Mahon

Pat Mahon was one of the first people called in after the terrorist attack on New York City's World Trade Center. The 30-year-old demolition worker and his fellow members of Laborers Local 79 worked around the clock to remove a bridge between the two towers, then stayed on, working 12 hours or more each day to help recover bodies.

"We lift the steel out and take out the debris. When we find a body, we stop and call in the firemen and police," he says. "One day we found 20 bodies. Television pictures don't do justice to the magnitude of this tragedy."

"It broke my heart. We can build a new building, but we'll never bring those people back—all those innocent people just going to work in the morning."

One body that has not yet been found is that of Mahon's friend who worked on the 105th floor of the north tower. "I just hope we can find all the bodies so all the families can find some closure," he says.

The tragedy has been particularly rough on Mahon's two children, ages six and eight. "They're afraid I'm going to get hurt or die



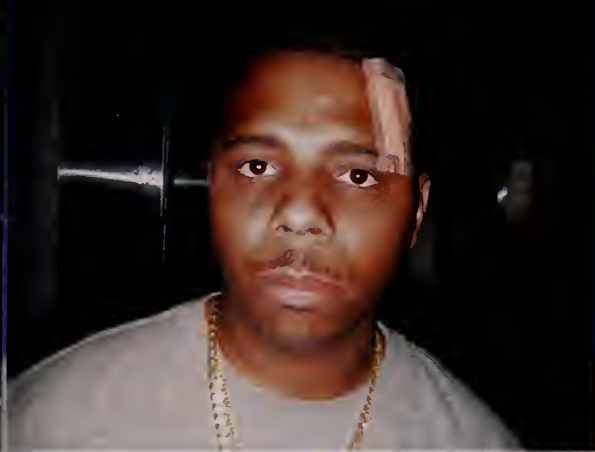
MICHELLE FRANKFURTER

on the job. I haven't been home a lot and they are really happy to see me when I come in. And after seeing so much death and destruction all day, it really means a lot to me to see them." ☐



JIM TYNAN





SEIU

## Gabriel Torres

When the first plane hit the World Trade Center, Gabriel Torres, a security guard in nearby Building Five, saw “people running all over.” He called his mother, who works for the New York Police Department, to find out what was going on.

“I told her if anything happened to me, to tell my wife that I love her. I told my mother that I love her. Then I had to go. I didn’t know if I would ever see my family again.”

As he said goodbye, the second plane hit the south tower. Building Five, across a plaza from the twin towers, filled with black smoke. Torres, an SEIU Local 32BJ member, immediately began helping people evacuate. Blinded by the smoke, they followed one another’s voices, holding hands as they walked through the building. When two firefighters asked Torres to help them navigate through the building to find people in need of assistance, he led them to an underground parking area beneath Building One—and that’s where they were when the ceiling began to fall.

Trapped under the debris, they dug their way out until they saw light and realized they were in “a big hole”—what had been the plaza between Buildings Five and Six.

“There was nothing but rocks and smoke around us. We couldn’t go any further,” he says. The three men were rescued two hours later.

Torres, 29, whose injuries include a leg wound so deep he could “see the bone,” knows he is among the fortunate: 64 SEIU Local 32BJ members who worked at the World Trade Center—janitors and window washers, security personnel and cleaners—never made it out.

Five days after the terrorist attack, Torres’s son turned two years old. “We baptized him on his birthday,” Torres says. “I’m lucky. If anything had happened to me, he wouldn’t remember his father.”

### Teamsters

## Christopher Hope

Two days after the Sept. 11 terrorist bombings, Christopher Hope, a United Parcel Service driver and member of Memphis-based Teamsters Local 668, was part of the relief effort headed to New York City, driving a tractor-trailer 1,100 miles with a load of communications equipment needed by the Red Cross.

“There are 200 drivers in my building, and to know that I’m the first one they asked to go, that was a great honor,” recalls the 15-year UPS veteran. “It was an opportunity for me to help in a little way.”

The Red Cross gave Hope disaster relief placards to affix to his rig. On the highways, motorists blew their horns in support and gave the thumbs-up sign.

Arriving on the outskirts of New York, Hope was at the wheel Friday morning—when getting into the city took more than four hours. “We could view everything from the Brooklyn Bridge,” he says. “To see everything on television is one thing, but to actually be in the city, it was unreal. The only thing that kept me from crying was the traffic—I didn’t want to run my bumper into someone.”

Finally at the devastated World Trade Center area, Hope was awed by the amount of relief work going on: “I told my supervisor, ‘Why don’t we go over there in our brown uniforms and help pour concrete?’ We knew we couldn’t. But I did want to stay and continue helping. I haven’t been the same since I’ve been home. I’m glad that I could be of service.”



SAM HOLLENSHEAD/LABOR RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

*“We came down here to help. This is our city. We work here and we want to be involved. We’re all trades people. We’re talented and we have skills we can use and we just want to help.”*

—Ralph Pascarella (front), director of apprenticeship training, Operating Engineers Local 30 in Queens, N.Y., while at Manhattan’s Jacob Javits Convention Center, where skilled union volunteers signed up to help at the site of the World Trade Center.

MICHELLE FRANKFURTER





**NY State Psychological  
Association/AFT**

## Noemi Balinth

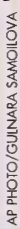
Despite immeasurable suffering and destruction in the days following the Sept. 11 tragedy, rescue workers did not have to look far to find support and comfort with professionals like Dr. Noemi Balinth. A member of the New York State Psychological Association, an AFT affiliate, and the Red Cross-affiliated disaster response network, Balinth was a volunteer counselor on the scene at New York's Shea Stadium. There, rescue workers who had volunteered from across the country came to get a shower, a hot meal and a few hours of sleep.

"We didn't sit people down and ask, 'How are you feeling?'" says Balinth, a psychologist. Instead, counselors would "hang out" with the rescuers, who gradually began to talk about their thoughts and experiences. At that point, counselors discussed how feelings of detachment and avoidance are normal initial reactions to devastating events—as are feelings of emotional volatility and agitation, and difficulty in eating and sleeping.

"The message I send is that these are normal reactions to abnormal events," says Balinth, past president of the association

and one of hundreds of Psychological Association members who volunteered. "That's very reassuring to people."

Balinth, who had volunteered following the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and the crash of TWA Flight 800 on Long Island, also spent a day at a Red Cross family support center in Manhattan, where family members could gather and deliver DNA samples of their lost loved ones.


There, she counseled rescue workers whose strength had been based on the hope they would find people alive. Balinth says when she reassured volunteers about the "grim part of their jobs"—helping families know the truth about what happened to their relatives—the volunteers found some comfort. 



JIM CALLAWAY

**UAW**

## Tim McGill


Tim McGill of UAW Local 863 in Sharonville, Ohio, was one of 45 union members who turned out for a union-sponsored blood drive at the Ford Motor Company transmission plant Sept. 19—and among thousands of union members who gave blood across the country for victims of Sept. 11. A few days earlier, Local 863 activists stood at the plant gates collecting money for the Red Cross's Relief and Rescue Fund—and in two mornings, they raised more than \$5,600, which Ford matched dollar for dollar. Local 863 also joined with neighboring Local 674 (General Motors) and Local 647 (General Electric) to sponsor a blood drive open to the public at its union hall. 

*"I went down  
there to see if  
anybody needed  
help. As soon as  
I was able to walk  
one person out,  
I went back to find  
someone else. It's my  
duty as an American,  
as a New Yorker,  
to be there to help.  
That's what  
Americans do.  
We help each other."*

—Joseph Rabito  
(far right),  
Sheet Metal Workers  
Local 28

MICHAEL WEISBROT





# American Tragedy Union Heroes

## Seafarers

### Capt. Kirk Slater

In the days and weeks after terrorists piloted hijacked jetliners into the World Trade Center, Capt. Kirk Slater found himself closely studying the faces of commuters onboard his New York Waterways ferry from New Jersey to Manhattan.

"You get to know people by their faces. They take the same boat every day. I can't help but wonder about the people I took over there that morning, how many were in those buildings. We're all looking for familiar faces," says Kirk, a Seafarers member who has captained the SIU-crewed commuter ferries for eight years.

Kirk and two SIU deckhands aboard the 150-passenger *West New York* already had made several runs to the World Financial Center terminal Sept. 11 when the first plane hit. He headed back to the terminal for a day-long rescue effort.

After two trips, "I looked up and saw the second plane go right into the Trade Center." Soon after, Slater says, he "heard this rumble."

"The first building came down, came down fast. It was a crystal-clear day, but this huge [debris] cloud was approaching us. I had a full load, so I got out of there fast. But it engulfed us, like the worst fog," he says. The day's wind patterns kept the debris cloud from cloaking the Hudson River shore, but many rescue boats were forced to use radar to navigate safely.

When Slater returned to Manhattan, his ferry filled with victims. "We had to use the man-overboard ladder, steadied up against the seawall, and bring down injured fire-fighters, including one who was having a heart attack," he says.

Following the tragedy, Slater and his crew transported rescue workers, "including a lot of ironworkers and EMTs," and rescue and recovery gear to the disaster site.

Now guiding the ferry along its regular passenger route, Slater says it will be a long time before he stops looking for familiar faces. ☐





## Transport Workers

### John Samuelsen

When John Samuelsen headed to the site of the World Trade Center disaster instead of to his office at Transport Workers Local 100 Sept. 12, he spotted dozens of Local 100 track workers—including many who had just gotten off the night shift. Like him and thousands of other union members, they had spontaneously volunteered their skills to help with recovery efforts.

"They hadn't waited to hear from their unions or management," says Samuelsen, a subway worker by trade. "I was proud of that."

Samuelsen, chairman of New York City's 2,000 track workers and the father of two, including a three-week-old infant, says the initial recovery work called on human fortitude more than anything. While Local 100 members volunteered or were assigned to weld, maintain equipment or drive trucks later that day, the first work was strictly by hand, he says. As firefighters and police officers searched for survivors, they pulled away rubble they then passed through a human chain made up of Samuelsen and hundreds of union members. Meanwhile, TWU Local 1400 members kept traffic flowing through



JACK BLAZEJEWICZ/TWU LOCAL 100

the tunnels to the city and other Local 100 members kept city transit moving so relief workers could access the area.

"My initial reaction was feeling totally American, and violated," he recalls. "And

then I felt anger." Samuelsen returned five days later to survey the extensive damage to the subway track—which many of Local 100's 37,000 members were already at work rebuilding. @

## Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union/United Food and Commercial Workers

### Andre Johnson

Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union Local 338 in New York City, thankful that no member was killed in the attack on the World Trade Center, swiftly created a food bank for the families of the victims. Union members took turns standing outside unionized food stores across Manhattan handing out fliers and asking shoppers to buy a few extra canned goods and non-perishable foods to donate to the families.

Helping out is what being a union member is about, says Local 338 member Andre Johnson, who volunteered to collect food. "It's all about understanding and coming together to try to do something as workers for each other. It's about respect for each other."

"I can't put into words how I feel," Johnson says. "Everybody's family has been affected. Unions stand for togetherness, and we need to stay together because this is going to be a fight for a long time." @

MICHELLE FRANKFURTER





# The Pentagon Washington, D.C.

American  
Tragedy  
Union  
Heroes

AFGE

## Dora Jones

When the United airliner on its way from Washington, D.C., to Los Angeles crashed into the Pentagon on Sept. 11, computer specialist and AFGE Local 1092 member Dora Jones was in a meeting. The sound and reverberation of the impact didn't worry Jones at first. "When you work at the Pentagon, with all the construction, there are always little booms and bangs, so you don't pay attention," she explains.

But when told to evacuate the building because of an attack, Jones started for the exits. Then she and a supervisor remembered a co-worker who has a disability—and might have been stuck in his office.

So they ran back in, only to find that their co-worker had gotten out safely. Jones and her co-workers are among 2,000 AFGE members at the Pentagon and 200 at the World Trade Center who survived the attacks.

Finally outside and taking cover under trees, Jones, who has worked 32 years as a civilian with the Air Force and has four grown children, spotted a U.S. Air Force fighter jet. She told an AFGE co-worker it was "the most beautiful thing" she had ever seen. @



RICK REINHARD

## International Union of Police Associations Dan Morris

After a hijacked plane smashed into the Pentagon outside Washington, D.C., Sept. 11, Dan Morris raced to pack his gear—he knew he would be called to duty and likely wouldn't return for days.

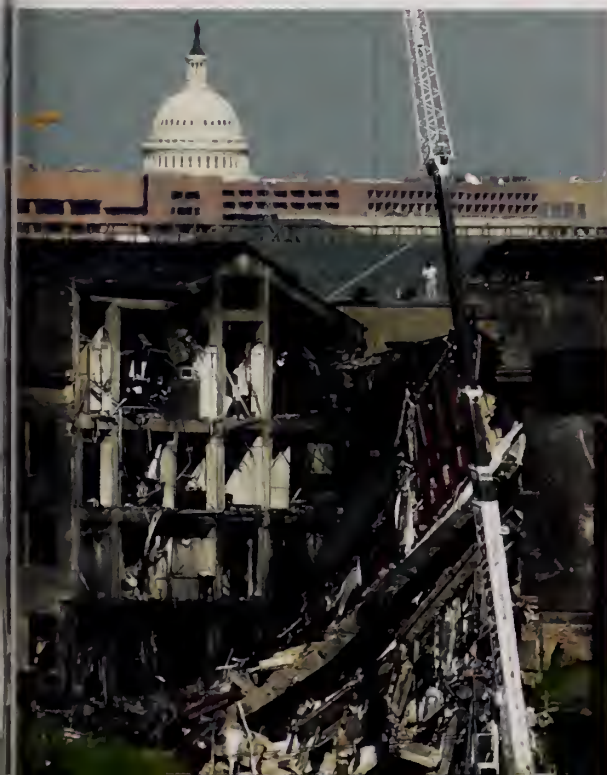
"It was one of the scariest days of my life," says the 19-year veteran of the Alexandria, Va., police force. "You didn't know what was going to happen next."

While military police handled operations at the Pentagon, Morris and officers from throughout the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area worked 12-hour shifts securing communities near the site. As black flames plumed above the Pentagon and motorists got caught in gridlock while evacuating over Potomac River bridges, Morris, 42, says it was the faces of the drivers that touched him.

"Some of them were crying so hard I didn't think they would be able to drive," he says. "I found myself taking a little extra time to talk to people. It was important for them to see the police, to know things were under control. I think it comforted a lot of people."

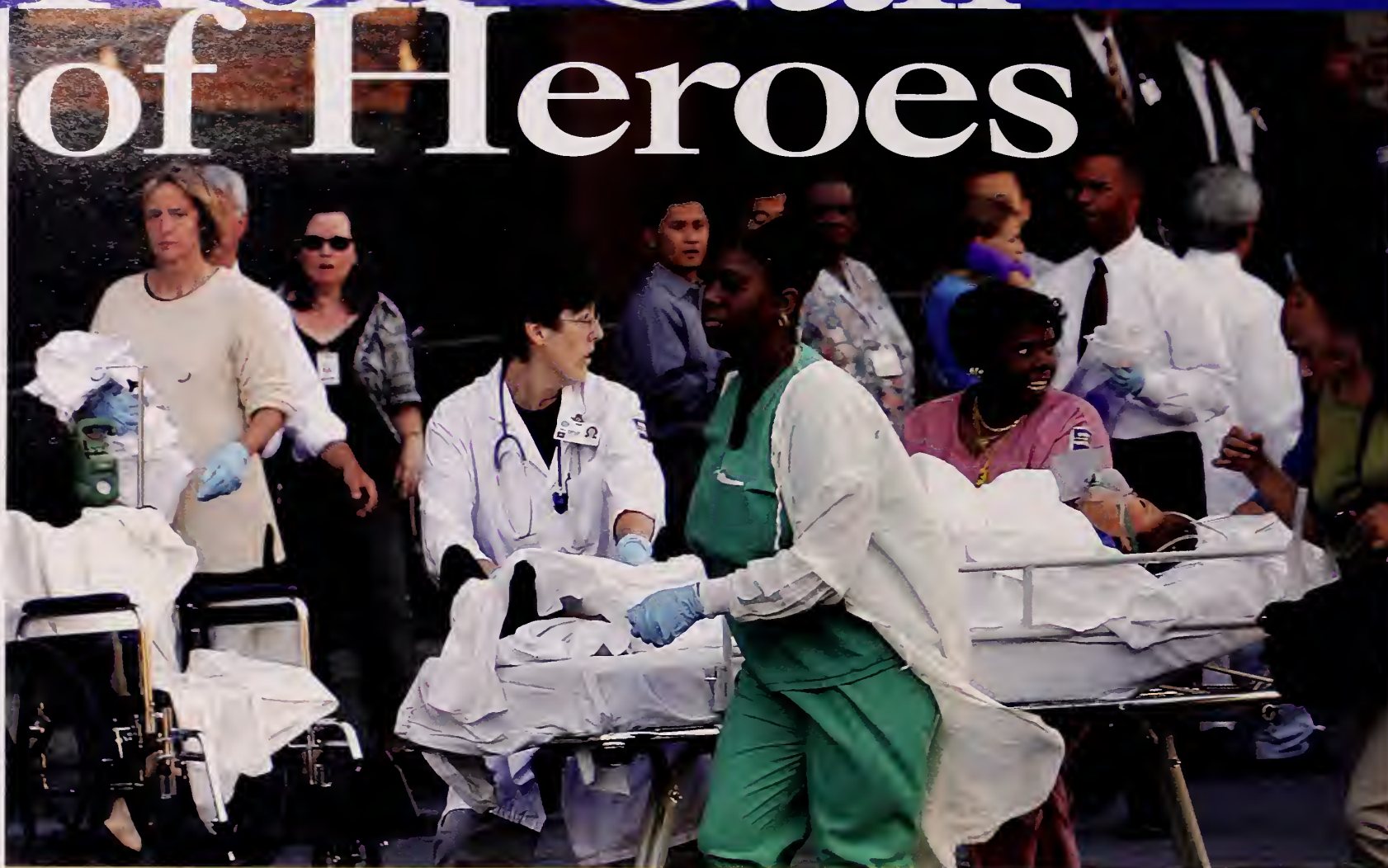
Later that week, Morris, a detective and single father of a 14-year-old daughter, helped set up security lines around the Pentagon. "When I saw the Pentagon for the first time after the attack, I was shocked. It didn't appear to be real."

Morris saw overwhelming pain in the aftermath of the attack. "I really felt for the people who were looking for family members and those involved in the rescue effort," he says. "I saw grown men doubled over from grief and their spouses helping them to stand up. I just stood there and said a long prayer asking for comfort for those who were hurting." @





# Roll Call of Heroes



JIM TYNAN

**Union members across the nation responded to the tragedies of Sept. 11 with the skills and mobilization that made possible rapid and effective rescue, relief and recovery.**

Many of the 2,500 emergency medical technicians and paramedics who are members of AFSCME Local 2507/District Council 37 rushed to the scene, dispensing emergency treatment and transporting victims to hospitals. Sixty-five EMTs and paramedics were injured; two remain missing. Several members of Emergency Medical Service Lieutenants & Captains, AFSCME Local 3621, also were injured. Hundreds of other DC 37 members aided with the rescue effort, including public health sanitarians from the Department of Health.

Health care workers who are members of SEIU 1199NY (above) aided disaster victims suffering from burns, trauma and smoke and dust inhalation at St. Vincent's and New York University Downtown hospitals, just blocks from the World Trade Center.

The New York State Police Investigators Association, IUPA, Local 4, assigned approximately 100 investigators to the World Trade Center recovery effort, including identifying the deceased, participating in a joint terrorist task force and responding to individuals who believe family members are trapped within the wreckage.

Machinists from Local 1269 in Genoa, Ill., who work for AG Communications prepared a mobile telephone switching unit that could handle 4,000 lines and drove it to New York City—a crucial backup for a shaken telecommunications system. Members of Electrical Workers Local 21 cooperated in the effort.

Bakery, Confectionary, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers locals 3 and 50 were contacted by New York emergency shelters and asked to obtain paper masks and gloves used by BCTGM workers in bakeries. After telephoning union bakeries, the locals helped distribute 20,000 masks to Manhattan rescue workers.

The New York State AFL-CIO and United Food and Commercial Workers locals 342-50 and 1500 arranged and loaded two shipments of donated food, water and



## Honor Our Union Heroes

A special e-card honoring the union men and women who lived their values and demonstrated the meaning of patriotism during our national crisis is available through the AFL-CIO. Click on <http://cardshop.aflcio.org>, and send a free "Proud to Be American, Proud to Be Union" e-card, which includes information on contributing to relief efforts through the AFL-CIO Union Community Fund.



other beverages for delivery to firefighters on the scene.

Postal Workers from several post offices around Richmond, Mich., packed, marked and loaded up supplies—ranging from face masks to dog food—onto trucks headed for the relief effort in New York City.

Hundreds of union members and staff knocked on doors throughout Washington, D.C., in an event sponsored by the Metropolitan Washington Council to let union families know how they could aid victims and their families. Noting that five members of his union were killed while working on top of the World Trade Center, Painters and Allied Trades District 51 organizer Don Rusche says he volunteered to go door to door because "the union spirit is to do good and help, not just in disasters but all the time."

Steelworkers Local 12003 activist John Meade in Boston mobilized nine of his co-workers at Boston Gas and drove to New York City to be part of the "bucket brigade" clearing debris from the World Trade Center. "My wife is a nurse," says Local 12003 member John Crehan. "She told me that I was going to be a changed man if I went there—and she's right."

Days after the Sept. 11 attack, International Federation of Professional and Tech-

nical Engineers members already were at work redesigning cockpit doors.

SEIU Local 32BJ, which represents janitors and other service workers in New York City, negotiated a comprehensive aid package for 1,800 members left jobless by the terrorist attack. The agreement between the union and the Realty Advisory Board on Labor Relations, the multi-employer association that negotiates building service contracts, gives displaced workers supplemental unemployment and health benefits for up to six months and plans to give preference to displaced janitors in future hiring.

In a show of solidarity with New Yorkers, AFSCME leaders moved their upcoming women's conference to Manhattan. The mid-November conference originally was slated to take place in Boston.

Eighteen Carpenters were killed in the World Trade Center attack, including one apprentice who was on his second day on the job. In the days following the attack, hundreds of Carpenters from New York and the surrounding areas joined in the rescue and recovery efforts.

"We may bury bodies, but not our spirits," Darryll Russell, business manager of Plumbers and Pipe Fitters Local 23 wrote in a letter accompanying his local's donation to the UA Emergency World Trade Center/Pentagon Assistance Program. The UA fund has raised more than \$500,000 from members and local unions since the attacks. Four members of Steamfitters Local 638 were killed and two injured Sept. 11.

About 500 members of Asbestos Workers/Laborers Local 78 have used their training and special skills in asbestos handling in the cleanup efforts at Ground Zero. Asbestos—a dangerous and cancer-causing insulation material—was used throughout the World Trade Center and damaged buildings nearby.

## American Tragedy Union Heroes



Relief efforts: New York State AFL-CIO President Denis Hughes (left) and New York CLC President Brian McLaughlin, who accompanied AFL-CIO President John Sweeney (center) to the site of the World Trade Center, are leading relief efforts across the city.

Stagehands, members of Theatrical Stage Employees, coordinated with production houses to provide rescuers with generators, staffing spotlights and other heavy equipment at no charge. Members of Actors' Equity, Musical Artists, Musicians Union, Screen Actors, Television and Radio Artists and Writers Guild of America, East, donated their time and talents for multimillion-dollar fundraisers to benefit victims' families. Communications Workers of America members staffed call-in centers for viewers making donations during televised fundraising performances. ☺

By early October, more than 2,000 union donors had contributed \$1.5 million to the AFL-CIO Union Community Fund's September 11th Relief Fund. Among the donors: Communications Workers of America, IUE-CWA and Transportation • Communications Union, each of which gave \$100,000, and Laborers, which contributed \$75,000. Donations are being directed to victims who otherwise could be overlooked: immigrants and low-paid workers who might not qualify for support.



of life: AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Rapson was among more than 220 AFL-CIO staff and area activists who donated blood at the federation's headquarters victims of Sept. 11.



## Resources for Recovery

In the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, hundreds of working families that have lost relatives and thousands of workers left injured or unemployed need financial assistance and emotional support. Especially vulnerable are children, who depend on the adults around them to help them understand what has happened. The following are some resources for recovery.

### Contributing to Relief Efforts

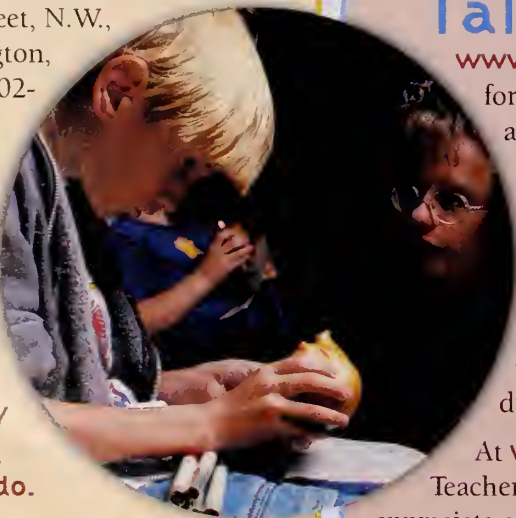
The Union Community Fund, the union movement's charity, set up a special September 11th Relief Fund. Donations can be made online with a credit card ([www.unioncommunityfund.org](http://www.unioncommunityfund.org)) or sent to Union Community Fund, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006. For more information, call 202-974-8389.



The New York City Central Labor Council disaster fund is taking donations at NYC Central Labor Council Disaster Fund, 386 Park Ave. South, New York, NY 10016. Call 212-685-9552 or visit [www.nycclc.org](http://www.nycclc.org) for more information.

The Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO, Community Services Agency has a Washington, D.C., and Northern Virginia Disaster Fund. Mail checks to the fund at 1925 K Street, N.W., Suite 410, Washington, D.C. 20006. Call 202-857-0480 for more information.

Many unions have set up funds as well. Check out a list with mailing addresses and web links at [www.aflcio.org/news/2001/0912\\_disasters\\_what2do.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/news/2001/0912_disasters_what2do.htm).



### Unemployment Assistance

[www.aflcio.org/paycheck/index.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/paycheck/index.htm):

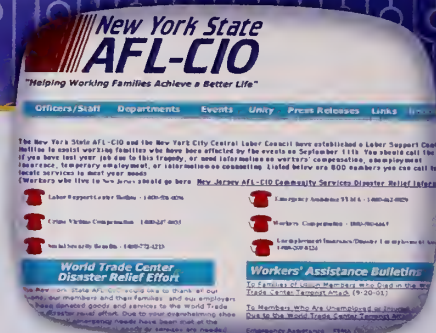
The AFL-CIO guide to unemployment assistance, "When the Paycheck Stops," is available online. It includes a financial action plan and advice on looking for a new job.

The AFL-CIO Working for America Institute's website at [www.workingforamerica.org](http://www.workingforamerica.org) offers practical

personal financial advice for workers facing unemployment. The site includes tips from the AFL-CIO, affiliated union organizations and the U.S. Department of Labor.

[www.nysaflcio.org](http://www.nysaflcio.org): The New York State AFL-CIO website offers guidance to help workers injured on the job during the Sept. 11 attack on the World Trade Center apply for workers' compensation benefits, as well as information on applying for unemployment insurance and Social Security benefits.

<http://ows.doleta.gov/unemploy/disaster.asp>: The U.S. Department of Labor provides advice on receiving unem-



ployment assistance for those out of work as a direct result of the disaster who don't qualify for normal unemployment insurance. General unemployment insurance resources from the Department of Labor are available at [www.workforcesecurity.doleta.gov/unemploy/resource.asp](http://www.workforcesecurity.doleta.gov/unemploy/resource.asp).

[www.firstgov.gov/featured/usgresponse.html#victims](http://www.firstgov.gov/featured/usgresponse.html#victims): FirstGov, the federal government's inclusive website, brings together information for workers left unemployed by the tragedy, along with a variety of information ranging from charity scams to gasoline price gouging in the aftermath of the disasters.

The Social Security Administration has emergency procedures to handle disaster-related claims for Social Security survivors or disability benefits. Call 800-772-1213 to apply or see [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) for more information.

The Economic Policy Institute offers an online calculator at [www.epinet.org/datazone/uicalc](http://www.epinet.org/datazone/uicalc) that enables workers in all 50 states and the District of Columbia to estimate how much money they will get if they apply for unemployment insurance.

For more unemployment assistance, see box, page 25. ☐

### Talking With Children

[www.aft.org/news/crisis\\_response.html](http://www.aft.org/news/crisis_response.html): AFT's site includes advice and links for adults, including teachers and counselors seeking to help children cope with the aftermath of the disaster.

[www.nasponline.org/NEAT/crisis\\_0911.html](http://www.nasponline.org/NEAT/crisis_0911.html): The National Association of School Psychologists offers extensive information, including handouts in PDF format describing how to talk with children about peace and tolerance. Materials are available in several languages, including Spanish, Arabic, Farsi and Vietnamese.

[www.nyspa.org/trauma.htm](http://www.nyspa.org/trauma.htm): The New York State Psychological Association, an AFT affiliate, provides guidance in talking with young people about the disaster. Resources are grouped by age.

At [www.uft.org/publications.cfm?doc\\_id=2045](http://www.uft.org/publications.cfm?doc_id=2045), the United Federation of Teachers, an AFT affiliate, offers links to a dozen websites aimed at helping students appreciate and respect cultural and religious differences. Sources include the Anti-Defamation League and [www.aboutourkids.org](http://www.aboutourkids.org), the website of New York University's Child Study Center.



# Stemming the Second Wave

By Jane Birnbaum

## Even before the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks,

the U.S. economy showed signs of faltering, with unemployment at 4.9 percent the highest since Sept. 1997, consumer confidence weakening and more than 1 million manufacturing jobs lost since July 2000.

Now, even as working families grieve for the dead and injured victims, they are experiencing another wave of attacks: massive layoffs coupled with inadequate unemployment benefits and health insurance. In late September, the airline industry announced layoffs of 140,000 workers. Already, the New York City area has lost more than 108,000 jobs as a result of the attack, according to the Fiscal Policy Institute.

With corporations now announcing layoffs almost daily, consumer confidence falling and stock prices teetering, the AFL-CIO and its member unions are poised to mount a two-pronged economic counter-attack.

First comes securing unemployed workers immediate relief—better unemployment insurance, subsidized health insurance and retraining. “Our job is to make sure no one involved in this terrible tragedy has to worry about their financial security,” says New York State AFL-CIO President Denis Hughes. “Union jobs with good futures have been lost, and we want to find good jobs for the unemployed to make sure no one is permanently disadvantaged by this tragedy.”

Next, to stimulate the economy, unions will advocate the federal government increase investment for building roads and schools and other basic needs across the nation that will enhance national security, address some long unmet needs and create jobs.

Looking ahead, layoffs in related industries such as aircraft manufacturing, tourism and hospitality could destroy hundreds of thousands of more jobs by the end of 2002, says Economic Policy Institute macroeconomist Christian Weller, a member of Interna-

tional Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers Local 70. “We need to get the unemployment rate down to below 4 percent again, and to do that, the economy has to grow faster,” Weller says. “To make that happen, the federal government has to spend money. We needed this before, but now we have no choice.”

Northeastern University professor of political economy Barry Bluestone, a member of the National Writers’ Union/UAW Local 1981 and a former assembly-line worker with UAW Local 898, agrees the federal government must immediately invest in America’s infrastructure.

“The only thing that would keep us from a fairly rapid recovery is reticence on the part of Congress and the president to stimulate the economy immediately on a large-scale basis,” says Bluestone, a former House Democratic leadership senior policy staff member. The spending should be coupled, he says, with immediate tax rebates and cuts for working families and a repeal of recent tax cuts for the wealthy.

But so far, there are signs that the corporate agenda, which dominated prior to Sept. 11, will continue to do so despite the altered economy.

“Big Business is at the table in Congress asking for everything, while workers are standing in unemployment lines and being offered health insurance they can’t afford,” says Dan LeBlanc, president of the Virginia State AFL-CIO. His state, which caps weekly unemployment benefits at a paltry \$268—the limit in North Carolina, for example, is \$375—lost approximately 11,000 airline, hospitality and travel-related jobs in the weeks when Reagan National Airport was closed.





RAY CROWELL/PAGE ONE

**Air time:** ALPA President Duane Woerth joined hundreds of aviation industry workers on Capitol Hill Oct. 3 to call on Congress to pass worker relief.

### Bailouts for Big Business

Immediately following Sept. 11, airline executives already were flooding Capitol Hill, asking Congress for a financial bailout, while many in Congress called for a cut in the capital gains tax, which would benefit the wealthy when they sell stock or luxury items. A cut in the capital gains tax would encourage stock selling—driving down stock prices and the value of workers' retirement savings, according to Bluestone. In the first post-Sept. 11 "economic recovery" bill passed in Congress, lawmakers couldn't spare a dime for laid-off workers—while handing the airlines \$15 billion with minimal caps on CEO compensation.

House Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-Texas) even went so far as to say it is not the American way to grant workers government help. "The model of thought... that says we need to go out and extend unemployment benefits and health insurance benefits and so forth is not, I think, one that is commensurate with the American spirit here," he said.

A few days later, bailout recipients Northwest and American Airlines even used the attack as an excuse not to give laid-off workers contractually agreed-upon severance pay and medical benefits. Then, after their plans made national headlines, they backtracked, announcing they will pay at least a portion of their contractual commitment to some union members.

Mary Fargerberg, who recently graduated from United's flight attendant training program and was four weeks short of complet-

ing her probation period to become an AFA member, received a termination letter last month—after fighting back fears to get on a plane in the wake of Sept. 11.

"We had just gotten a letter from United that said the company would handle the layoffs as kindly and humanely as possible. That was inhumane, the way they did that," she said. Fargerberg (below, left) spoke at an Oct. 3 press conference on Capitol Hill where hundreds of aviation industry workers called on lawmakers for worker relief.

In difficult times, representatives of working families and business historically have worked together, not at cross purposes. "President Bush should immediately call together leaders of business, labor and working families, as President Roosevelt did," says Thomas Kochan, co-director of the Institute for Work and Employment Research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "He should ask them to develop a compact for working together and forging a new set of principles for addressing the critical problems they will face as we move through this crisis."

But the Bush administration had sought no participation from union leaders in the formulation of its economic stimulus plan released Oct. 4. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 90 percent of the plan consists of

permanent tax cuts favoring corporations and the wealthy while the benefits for workers are "surprisingly meager." For example, the center finds the Bush plan gives workers extended unemployment insurance payments of only \$5 billion, a fraction of the \$28 billion in extended benefits—or \$35 billion in 2002 dollars—that Congress offered Americans looking for work during the recession of the early 1990s. Also, it would have states use State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) dollars to pay for unemployed workers' health care, potentially reducing the number of children that states can insure.

### Large-scale assistance needed for laid-off workers

After Sept. 11, Weller says, the economic malaise concentrated in manufacturing broke out full force in the airline industry, another pillar of the American economy. With reduced schedules and nearly empty planes, the airlines, the most densely unionized of American businesses, rapidly laid off thousands of workers belonging to unions including the Air Line Pilots, Communications Workers of America, Flight Attendants, Machinists, Teamsters and Transport Workers.

From the airlines, the losses spread to related industries, immediately affecting IFPTE, Machinists, Teamsters and the UAW. In late September, aircraft manufacturer Boeing revealed plans to shed up to 30,000 Seattle-area workers by the end of 2002.

"We're looking at a 10 to 15 percent decrease in aerospace jobs by the first



JAY MALIN

**Aid for workers:** AFA President Pat Friend (center) calls for worker relief in the wake of a \$15 billion bailout for the airline industry.





**Worker relief:** IAM President Thomas Buffenbarger says Machinists are looking at strategies to help workers in the hard-hit aerospace industry.

quarter of next year," says Machinists President Thomas Buffenbarger. "We're lobbying hard for immediate assistance for those affected, and we're working with aerospace companies to bring back subcontracted work."

And with many consumers not flying, the hospitality industry has been devastated. For example, the Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc., parent company of Sheraton, announced in late September it would lay off 23 percent of its North American workforce, about 10,000 employees. HERE estimates the union will lose one-third to one-half of its 265,000 members, many of them immigrants with good benefits.

"Our members are among the country's most vulnerable workers," says HERE President John Wilhelm. "Now they find themselves out of work, not to mention our 43 members who died in New York. I am pressing members of Congress for an immediate extension of health benefits, supplemental unemployment insurance and retraining assistance for the many thousands of hospitality workers affected."

### **Retraining a key component for recovery**

Many workers laid off as a result of the Sept. 11 attack require more than just unemployment and health care. "Our people absolutely need retraining to get jobs outside the airline industry," says CWA Local 2000 President Pam Terry, whose 600 members are U.S. Airways customer service agents at Reagan National Airport, which reopened on Oct. 4 but is not likely to resume full service in the near future. "The business was changing before Sept. 11, because business travel had fallen so much," she explains. Now, nearly 400 Local 2000 members have been laid off: "These are

high-quality people, who can be very valuable to the service industry."

They would be logical candidates to train as federally employed airport security personnel. Says CWA President Morton Bahr, "I support the call for the federalization of airport security staff. What happened Sept. 11 proves there is an important role for government in airport security, and that the push for privatization has diminished the quality of working people's lives and the quality of services we receive as citizens."

CWA also backs federal spending on infrastructure in cities and rural communities such as a broadband universal communication system, teachers, police, schools and transportation. "This has all been required before—now is the time to do it, to create not only good jobs but improvements

that working families have greatly needed," Bahr says.

CWA research economist Bob Patrician believes the entire U.S. economy must now be rethought. "It's not just a question of money for projects," he says. "The biggest change is everybody needs to think differently about what's considered normal, day-to-day business—and workers need to be at the table in making those decisions."

Says AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka: "As a progressive movement, and as leaders of the progressive community, we're going to have to be very vigilant in the coming months and years to prevent a corporate-driven agenda that shifts power and shifts money even further from working families and closer to corporations and the wealthy." ■

## **Unions Out Front With Job Assistance**

Unions in New York and the Washington, D.C., area moved quickly to ensure victims of the terrorist attacks receive unemployment assistance and, in some cases, new jobs.

### **New York City Area:**

■ **Labor Support Center Hotline:** 800-506-0036 (New York City metropolitan area only). Established by the New York City Central Labor Council and the New York State AFL-CIO, this hotline provides information, referrals and assistance, including job information for working families affected by the Sept. 11 attack. The support center also has a table at Pier 94 in lower Manhattan. Click on [http://nylaborresponse.ipbsites.com/en\\_us/index.html](http://nylaborresponse.ipbsites.com/en_us/index.html) for more information.

■ **Emergency Employment Clearinghouse Program:** 212-558-2261 for workers, 212-558-2250 for employers. This program, created by the New York City Central Labor Council, the Consortium for Worker Education and the New York City Partnership, matches New York City-area employers and workers left jobless after Sept. 11. As of Sept. 28, the clearinghouse had interviewed 1,328 workers and received 1,920 job listings, with 1,300 more jobs pledged. Click on [www.cwe.org/html/featurearticle/wtc.htm](http://www.cwe.org/html/featurearticle/wtc.htm) for more information.

### **Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Area:**

■ **The Community Services Agency of the Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO:** Call 202-857-0480, or e-mail Kathleen McKirchy at [kmckirch@delabor.org](mailto:kmckirch@delabor.org). Working with the Northern Virginia Central Labor Council, this agency is providing job referral and bill-payment assistance for union members unemployed as a result of the Sept. 11 attack.

■ **The Virginia State Employment Commission:** 877-872-5627. At the urging of the Virginia State AFL-CIO, the commission has established a temporary office at Terminal "A" in Reagan National Airport to assist unemployed workers. Information on filing unemployment claims and on employment and training opportunities is available. For more information, click on [www.vec.state.va.us](http://www.vec.state.va.us).

For more information on unemployment assistance, see Toolbox, page 22. ■



# Opening Doors and Breaking Barriers

By JAMES B. PARKS

**The union movement reaffirms its commitment to tolerance, immigrant rights and ensuring full workplace protection for all workers**

**When hijacked planes** crashed into the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon outside Washington, D.C., Sept. 11, the news that terrorists were behind the attack recast the ongoing debate on tolerance in the United States. In their grief, some Americans have wrongly chosen to blame Arab Americans, South Asian Americans, Muslim Americans and immigrants for the deaths of thousands. But the attacks hurt all Americans, regardless of race, ethnicity or religion—including Americans like Syed Armughan and Nafija Lekic.

Armughan, who emigrated from Pakistan, is president of Machinists Local 340, a union of 3,000 mostly Muslim limousine drivers in New York. Three-quarters of the union's work is in the financial district around the World Trade Center. "This hurt everyone," he says. "There are many Muslims working on Wall Street today, and surely many of them were killed in the attack."

"Some people are attacking Muslims and Arabs on the street and stoning mosques," he says. "This is wrong. We are Americans. We are hard-working people, just like everyone else."

Lekic, an ethnic Albanian and a Muslim, came to New York from Montenegro in search of the American dream for herself and her children, now ages 10, 17 and 21. "I came here for free religion, for better education for my children and for a better life," she says. For 15 years, she worked hard cleaning offices in the 225 Liberty Building—one of the structures that collapsed with the World Trade Center towers. Now she is out of work.

Her union, SEIU Local 32BJ, is helping her get unemployment assistance and find another job. "We all share this pain together," she says. "I pray for all those who lost someone."

Speaking out sharply against intolerance in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney says Americans need to reaffirm our common bonds with workers such as Armughan and Lekic.

"As one family, we must do everything that we can to prevent acts of prejudice against our fellow Americans based on racial, ethnic or religious stereotypes. This attack was a terrorist attack, not an attack by any religious or ethnic group."

"We join with the president and other political, religious and community leaders in calling upon all Americans to renew their commitment to tolerance and compassion for their neighbors at this most difficult time," Sweeney says.

Union members across the country are determined that the terrorist attacks against this nation will not set back what has been a growing national consensus that immigrant workers who work hard, earn their way and pay taxes need a new, fair immigration system to protect them.

Doug McGee, business manager for Sheet Metal Workers Local 54 in Houston, noticed a few years ago that practically every construction contractor in the city was cheating its workers in pay and benefits—and not coincidentally, the workers were almost all immigrants.

He says the point was driven home when 85 Latino employees of Quiet Flex, a nonunion flexible duct manufacturer, walked off the job two years ago after enduring low pay, poor benefits and unhealthy conditions. With the union's

help, they filed charges against the company with the National Labor Relations Board and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Those charges are still pending.

"The fact is, they are working hard and they deserve to live in this country with fair wages and benefits," McGee says. "We should be opening doors and breaking down barriers to bring them into the union."

As the issue of immigration took center stage this summer in a nationwide policy debate about the fate of millions of undocumented men and women who work, pay taxes, support their families and contribute to their communities, the union movement reaffirmed its commitment to fair



PAUL BARRY/HERE

**Stronger together:** HERE President John Wilhelm joined workers on Capitol Hill for a Sept. 6 rally in support of immigrants' rights.





Breaking barriers: Union members and immigrant workers rallied on Capitol Hill in September to call for immigration reform.

immigration reform made last year by the AFL-CIO Executive Council.

Building on its far-reaching call for new federal policies that protect immigrant workers' rights, the council in July reiterated its support for legal status and for full workplace protection and rights for all workers. Council members also urged unions and businesses to jointly design mechanisms to meet legitimate needs for new workers without compromising the rights and opportunities of workers already here.

"We have to make it clear that we're on their side," says HERE President John Wilhelm, who chairs the AFL-CIO Executive Council immigration committee. "This is especially important," Wilhelm says, "in light of the tragedies in New York and Washington, D.C. We need to embrace our entire immigrant population."

Following the council's call to action, thousands of union members and immigrant activists across the country marched, rallied and lobbied in more than two dozen cities throughout the August congressional recess in support of fair and real immigration reform.

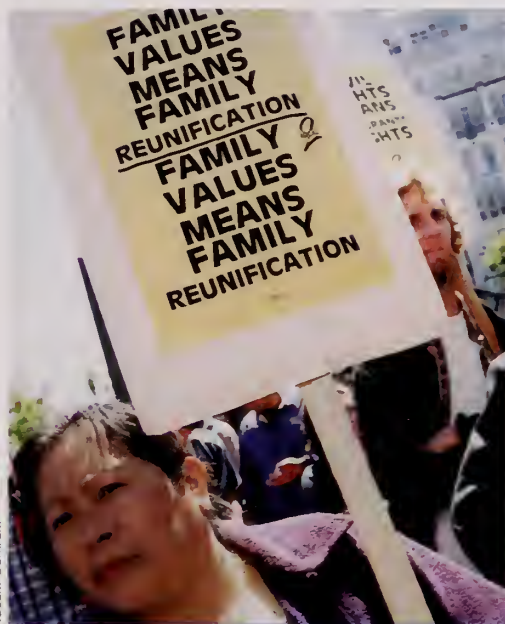
In September, union members took their message directly to Congress, as Mexican President Vicente Fox traveled to Washington, D.C., for meetings with lawmakers, President George W. Bush and

Sweeney. At a Capitol Hill press conference, immigrant workers such as Janusz Szymanski joined union members to call for immigration reform legislation.

"We need to speak out so the people in Congress know how immigrant workers are mistreated and so they know what the government has to do to make sure that everyone gets equal protection," says Szymanski, a Laborers Local 79 member in New York City. Szymanski emigrated from Poland in 1991 and has held several asbestos abatement jobs—hazardous jobs filled predominantly by immigrants. Before the Laborers' massive organizing campaign resulted in a union contract for most of the city's asbestos workers in 1995, Szymanski says employers paid the immigrant workers low wages, often provided shoddy safety equipment and threatened or fired those who complained.

### Immigrant workers: Boosting the nation's economy

Fair immigration laws do not just protect immigrants. In fact, winning legal status for undocumented immigrants would benefit the nation's economy, according to a study released in August. Undocumented immigrants contribute about \$300 billion annually to the U.S. economy, and they would be more productive if they were granted legal status, according to *Comprehensive Migration Policy Reform in North America: The Key to Sustainable and Equitable Economic Integration*. The study by the North American Integration and Development Center at the University of California, Los Angeles, is available at <http://naid.spsr.ucla.edu>.



ROBERT GUMPERT

Opening doors: Workers in San Francisco (above) and across the country took part in a nationwide series of union-sponsored rallies in support of rights for immigrant workers.

### In February 2000, the AFL-CIO adopted the following principles on immigration reform:

- Grant legal status to undocumented workers and their families.
- Replace employer sanctions and the I-9 system with a new system that targets businesses that exploit workers.
- Ensure workplace rights for immigrants.
- Design ways to meet legitimate needs of new workers.
- Reform, but do not expand, guest worker programs.

Communities become stronger when employers provide better-paying jobs, health insurance and safe working environments for all workers, says Kent Wong, director of the University of California, Los Angeles Labor Center. He cites a 1998 study, *A Fiscal Portrait of the Newest Americans*, by the National Immigration Forum and the conservative Cato Institute that shows immigrant workers pay at least \$133 billion in taxes each year.

### Back to unions' roots

Yet, in reality, many immigrant workers are forced to live and work in fear because they face the constant threat of harassment, abuse and deportation.

"They live in fear of being deported, says John Ryan, executive secretary of the Cleveland Federation of Labor. "That's one more tool employers use to intimidate and oppress the workers." At the same time, employers use immigrants to drive down wages for all workers, Ryan says.

The effort to protect immigrants also is bringing the union movement back to its historical roots. Unions were formed primarily by European immigrants seeking a better life—new arrivals in America who risked their lives for workers' rights, such as in the 1886 Haymarket Square massacre, which led to the eight-hour workday.

"A lot of the mean-spirited and racist things being said today about immigrants were said about our ancestors," Ryan says. "Some of the same problems immigrants have today—being exploited in poor-paying jobs, for example—are the same problems our parents had. Now those cities again are real melting pots of people from different countries who came here for one purpose—a better life."

For more information on the fight for fair immigration reform, visit [www.aflcio.org/immigrantworkers](http://www.aflcio.org/immigrantworkers). @



The U.S. Department of Labor postponed a planned announcement on the Bush administration's next steps on dealing with ergonomics injuries, but a decision is promised this fall. Activists can urge Labor Secretary Elaine Chao to support a strong ergonomics standard by calling her office at 202-693-6000 or writing her at the Labor Department, 200 Constitution Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20210. Activists also can e-mail their elected representatives through the AFL-CIO website—click on [www.aflcio.org/safety](http://www.aflcio.org/safety) for the e-letter and more information.

# Ergonomics Follies

## Sham Forums and Pseudoscience

**W**orkers at United Parcel Service endure painful injuries on the job because there is no requirement that employers protect workers against ergonomics injuries, says former UPS driver Wayne Fernicola. Last year, the Hillside, N.J.-based Teamsters Local 1777 secretary-treasurer testified at a

rent of criticisms, litigation and congressional review"—although a decade of OSHA hearings and independent studies already confirm carpal tunnel syndrome and other repetitive stress injuries are serious workplace hazards caused by heavy lifting, repetitive work and poorly designed workstations. In fact, each year, more than 1.8 million U.S. workers suffer painful ergonomics-related injuries on the job, some 600,000 of which are serious enough to require time off from work.

And while the Labor Department selected dozens of opponents of an ergonomics rule to testify at each forum, it did not choose to hear from any scientific organization that supports protection against repetitive strain injuries, such as the American Public Health Association, which asked to testify. At the same time, the Labor Department severely limited the number of workers allowed to participate.

And as it has with the ongoing Social Security privatization commission meetings, the Bush administration spent taxpayer dollars to hold these "public" forums at three universities far from accessible public transportation and outside central urban areas, even though federal buildings—the customary locations for such events—are rent-free and easily reached by the public.

Activists like Fernicola are skeptical the Bush administration will push for a meaningful ergonomics rule. "The Bush administration knows how important this issue is to unions and working families," he says. "It's going through the motions to stall, to placate us, so it can hold onto congressional seats in 2002 and everything else."

"Everything else" includes President George W. Bush's nomination of Eugene

Scalia for solicitor of the U.S. Department of Labor, a job that includes directing the lawyers who enforce worker protections. Scalia has been an architect of Big Business's campaign against a meaningful ergonomics standard. The Senate Labor Committee will hold a hearing on his nomination this fall.

As an attorney, Scalia has represented some of the ergonomics standard's loudest foes—the National Coalition on Ergonomics, UPS and Anheuser-Busch.

Scalia has staked out an extreme position in opposing ergonomics rules. He has called the science of ergonomics "junk science par excellence" and has questioned whether repetitive motion leads to ergonomics injuries.

During this summer's forums, experts hand-picked by the Department of Labor brazenly promoted Scalia's themes. At George Mason University's Arlington, Va., campus—where activists marched and cheered the antics of puppets dressed as Bush and a Big Business "fat cat" with cold cash spilling from his pockets—Dr. Nortin Hadler announced that the ergonomics rule passed last year would have led to "task modifications that have never been shown to be helpful."

But that's not the evidence on the shop floor. For example, Greg Wakefield, a UNITE Mid-Atlantic Region staff representative, testified at the Arlington, Va., forum in July about a successful ergonomics program at the Lear Co.'s auto carpeting plant in Lewistown, Pa.

After OSHA cited the company for ergonomics hazards, managers and workers together redesigned tasks. "Soon the injuries dropped in half...and the company saw higher production, better quality and reduced workers' compensation costs," Wakefield reported.

UNITE's health and safety director, Eric Frumin, summed it up this way: "Now, after 20 years of OSHA citations, 10 years of formal rulemaking and two major reviews of the scientific literature by the National Academy of Sciences, OSHA has suddenly said to employers: 'We don't know if these injuries are real or if they are work-related.' What a terrible signal to send to employers looking for effective guidance." ☐

—Jane Birnbaum



**Stop the pain: AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka and hundreds of union members protested the first of three sham ergonomics forums this summer.**

federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration hearing about the need for a federal ergonomics rule. Yet, despite Fernicola's testimony and 10 years of serious scientific study and effort by union health and safety activists, the OSHA ergonomics protection rule passed last December was killed in Congress early this year in one of the first attacks on workers by the Bush administration and Big Business.

This summer, Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao revisited the ergonomics issue yet again "to find a way to prevent ergonomics injuries that will survive the expected tor-



# Union Outreach to Law Students

## A Case Study in Success

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

As Fausto Zapata listens to a union activist describe the case of five Longshoremen in South Carolina languishing under house arrest and facing trumped-up felony charges, he shakes his head slowly from side to side. A few seats away around the horseshoe-shaped table, Virginia Donnelly furrows her brow as she hears that the union members were arrested as a result of their peaceful protest of a ship using nonunion labor in the Charleston port and alleged attack by 600 police officers in riot gear wielding clubs and tear gas. Zapata and Donnelly are preparing to become lawyers to help defend and expand workers' rights, and they came together on July 21 to learn more about the union movement and their role in strengthening it.

Zapata and Donnelly are among 32 law students taking part in the AFL-CIO's Minority Outreach Program. For the past four years, the program has helped law firms and unions recruit law students for summer jobs across the country. Each year, it brings together the students, who seek to pursue a career in labor law, in a two-day networking conference at the George Meany Center for Labor Studies in Silver Spring, Md., just outside Washington, D.C. There, they have the opportunity to learn the basics about union organizing, meet each other and get career advice from veteran lawyers.

The travesty of the Charleston workers is part of the students' crash course on unions at the conference. "I'm disgusted at the abuse the government is imposing on people who were exercising their free-speech rights and their rights as union members," says the 27-year-old Zapata, now in his third year at Cardozo Law School in New York City.

"The goal is to encourage law students of color to consider labor law," says Mindy Holmes, an attorney at the labor law firm of O'Donnell, Schwartz & Anderson in Washington, D.C., who six years ago entered the field through the AFL-CIO's outreach program and now helps coordinate it. The two-day networking conference "is a way for the students to meet each other and gain a broader understanding of the union movement, such as the relationship between politics and organizing, and get a sense of the bigger picture," Holmes adds.

Donnelly, who was a member of AFSCME Local 371 when she worked as a counselor in New York City's Department of Juvenile Justice, has a wide view of the link between labor law and union strength. "There needs to be more unionized workers. When you read cases, you see some horrendous things supervisors do, like harassing workers for taking sick time," says Donnelly, who spent

RICK REINHARD



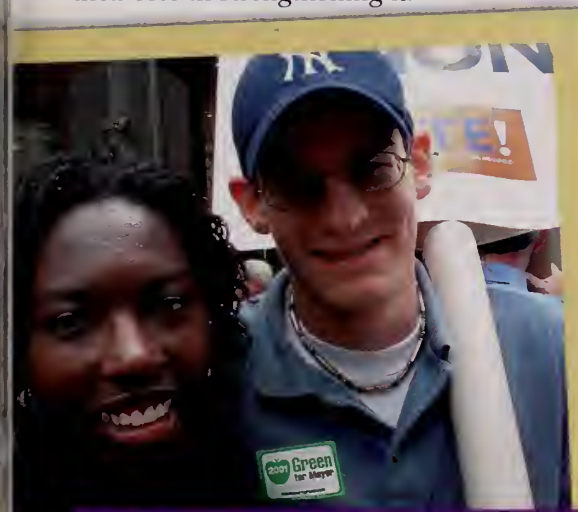
Eric Liggins

the summer at the Communications Workers of America's Washington, D.C., headquarters working on arbitration cases and a case alleging a manager hit a union steward. Now on her second career, Donnelly was in her late 40s before entering law school at City University of New York in Queens in 1999.

Donnelly's CUNY classmate Amy Hong says she originally wanted a career in employment discrimination law. "But I realized that workers have no real protections without solidarity from other workers," says Hong. "It's hard to fight large corporations by yourself. Organizing and collective bargaining make more sense." During her summer job at Levy, Ratner & Behrooz, a labor law firm in New York City, Hong conducted research to bolster cases, including wage and hours protection cases on behalf of home care workers.

It was only after a presentation by top union officials at the July networking conference on the AFL-CIO Common Sense Economics program, which enables workers to learn more about the economy and unions' role in the economy, that Erik Liggins says he realized the extent to which workers benefit when unions are strong. "It really opened my eyes," says Liggins, the son of the secretary-treasurer of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 870. "I didn't know about wages going down" as the rate of union membership fell, Liggins says.

As he worked on cases of unfair firings during his summer job at the San Francisco law firm of Davis, Cowell and Bowe, Liggins says he learned "workers don't have as



NORELIS SANTIAGO

Summer success: Stephen Lentz, a Syracuse Law School student, and St. Mary's University School of Law student Karla Jackson helped UNITE organizers during the ultimately victorious Up-to-Date laundry strike in Baltimore.



# "It's hard to fight large corporations by yourself. Organizing and collective bargaining make more sense."



Amy Hong

RICK REINHARD

much protection from discipline as I thought they did." Nonunion workers, in fact, have few protections, a situation that is widely misunderstood, according to a recent survey for the AFL-CIO by Peter D. Hart Research Associates. Nearly two-thirds of workers surveyed mistakenly think an employer cannot legally fire an employee with a good performance record without a good reason.

To help law students understand the obstacles workers face during organizing campaigns—even before they win the contracts these future lawyers may help defend—the AFL-CIO this year created Law Student Union Summer. Modeled after the successful Union Summer program, now in its sixth year, which places college students and workers in organizing and first-contract campaigns, Law Student Union Summer enables law students to combine their commitment to social justice with their legal skills for a 10-week, ground-level internship.

Law student Melissa Barrows, working with Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Local 10 in Cleveland, says what she saw during an organizing campaign helped her understand how difficult it is for workers to get a voice on the job. After workers at a Hyatt Regency Hotel convinced management to stay neutral during a one-week union organizing campaign this summer, pro-union activists set up a table at the cafeteria where they could talk with co-workers. Suddenly, managers

started eating at the cafeteria—which they rarely had frequented before the campaign started. From their vantage point, managers could watch to see which workers talked with union organizers.

"A lot of labor lawyers never get to experience what their clients are going through," says the 23-year-old Barrows, a second-year student at Marshall College of Law at Cleveland State University and one of 11 interns in Law Student Union Summer. "You get to see all those things."

Stephen Lentz, a Syracuse Law School student, helped UNITE organizers during the ultimately victorious Up-to-Date laundry strike in Baltimore. "I learned about what goes on in a strike or an organizing campaign," says Lentz. "The program ties together being a labor lawyer with what organizers do, which is the core of the union movement."

Through two distinct approaches, both programs enable law students to catch a glimpse of their futures. At the Meany Center, the law students heard from Patricia Howard, who landed a legal fellowship working at SEIU after completing the summer job she found through the AFL-CIO Minority Outreach Program. Howard was

part of the legal team SEIU sent to Florida to investigate abuses of voting rights amid the tumult of the 2000 presidential election.

"We interviewed voters who experienced discrimination at the polls and even set up tables outside a union hall in an agricultural area in the state to take affidavits," Howard told the students, passing around a small photo album that included a shot of her sitting at a card table at the edge of a dirt road with palm trees silhouetted against the night sky. One woman Howard interviewed in Tampa said her friend's ballot was pre-punched for a presidential candidate. The NAACP used some of the affidavits she collected in a lawsuit. "Six months out of law school and I was a part of history," says Howard. "It was a great honor." ■

## In Brief: Legal Resources

For more information or to apply to the Minority Outreach Program, contact Maggie Rock at the AFL-CIO Lawyers Coordinating Committee at 202-637-5215 or mrock@afllcio.org.

### Public Interest Law Resources on the Web:

- The National Association for Public Interest Law, [www.napil.org](http://www.napil.org), is dedicated to surmounting barriers to equal justice that affect low-income individuals and families. It organizes, trains and supports public service-minded law students.
- The National Employment Lawyers Association, [www.nela.org](http://www.nela.org), is a professional organization for lawyers who represent individual employees in cases involving employment discrimination and other employment-related matters.
- The Center for Law and Social Policy, [www.clasp.org](http://www.clasp.org), advocates at the state and federal level for laws that will improve working families' lives.



Fausto Zapata

RICK REINHARD



## PUBLICATIONS

*In Rekindling the Movement: Labor's Quest for Relevance in the 21st Century*, edited by Lowell Turner, Harry C. Katz and Richard W. Hurd, 18

authors and editors examine the new strategies and innovations fueling the resurgence of the union movement and discuss the challenges unions face in representing today's more diverse workforce. The authors assess the restructuring of the AFL-CIO, union mergers, globalization, obstacles to changing to

organize, building "social movement unionism," high-road partnerships on education and training, fair trade and the battle for workers' rights. \$19.95 paper, \$45 cloth. Cornell University Press.

Available in bookstores and at [www.cornellpress.cornell.edu](http://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu).

*How Much Is Enough? Basic Family Budgets for Working Families*, by Jared Bernstein, Chauna Brocht and Maggie Spade-Aguilar, finds the federal government's official poverty measure "is conceptually insufficient for measuring the basic income needs of a working family." The authors demonstrate how expenditures by low-income families on basic necessities often fall below the family budget levels recommended by social policy experts. To overcome this income gap, the authors say that higher-paying jobs or economic subsidies, or both, are needed. Economic Policy Institute. Order at [www.epinet.org](http://www.epinet.org) for \$12.95 or download from the website free in Adobe PDF format.

The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation has updated and printed an English and Spanish version of its guide *Talking With Your Parents About Medicare and Health Coverage*. The Medicare Rights Center helped develop the guide, which answers common questions about Medicare, including coverage and choosing among managed care organizations. The guides are available online at [www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org). For 100 or fewer copies, call 800-656-4533 and ask for Publication #1629 for the Eng-

## Capital Stewardship Program

The Capital Stewardship Certificate Program has announced its fall schedules of courses, which range from fiduciary duty to innovative investment strategies, active ownership techniques and corporate governance. Created by the National Labor College and the AFL-CIO Center for Working Capital, with input from more than a dozen international union pension funds, the program is designed to provide participants with a comprehensive education on pension fund trusteeship. The first course, Introduction to Capital Stewardship, is Oct. 25-26 in New York City for area trustees. It will also be given in California later this year at a soon-to-be-announced date. The second course, Investment Strategies, will be offered Oct. 28-Nov. 1 at the George Meany Center for Labor Studies in Silver Spring, Md. For more information, call the Center for Working Capital's Tris Newbury at 202-974-8022; or e-mail at [bnewbury@aflcio.org](mailto:bnewbury@aflcio.org). @

CENTER  
FOR  
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CAPITAL

lish version and Publication #1605 for the Spanish version. For more than 100, call Tiffany Ford at 202-347-5270. Individual and bulk orders are free. @

## EXHIBIT

"Work Culture in a Changing World: Images of London's Smithfield Market and of Massachusetts' Cranberry Bogs," an exhibit of 39 photographs by Beverly Conley, is on display at the George Meany Memorial Archives in Silver Spring, Md., through Nov. 4. Conley's photos depict meat work-



ers and cranberry workers whose work has passed from generation to generation. Conley is a documentary photographer from Ann Arbor, Mich. For directions and more information, call 301-431-5451. @

## WEBSIGHTINGS

[www.workers.gov](http://www.workers.gov)—This site provides working families hundreds of links to federal government information listed under topics that include jobs, family and health, money management, citizenship, learning, transportation and housing and recreation and travel. Visitors can click on "Phone Your Government" to receive a

directory of federal government telephone numbers (many toll free) arranged by topics ranging from work and family issues to retirement.

[users.erols.com/czarlab](http://users.erols.com/czarlab)—Ed Czarnecki, a retired assistant director of the AFL-CIO Education Department, is the webmaster of this site, which features the latest in union education and much more. The site offers links to more than 200 websites containing union-oriented information, and a free monthly newsletter, which can be ordered online. @

## MUSIC

"Stand Up Together," by Harold Palmer, is a compilation of 14 patriotic, labor and inspirational songs union members will find especially moving following the tragedies of Sept. 11. Palmer, a concert baritone, is the central regional director of the Ohio Association of School Employees/AFSCME Local 4. His strong performances on "The Star Spangled Banner" and "America, the Beautiful" are matched in his renditions of "Solidarity Forever" and other union standards. \$15 for CD. Order online at [www.palmerhouseproductions.com](http://www.palmerhouseproductions.com) or call 614-751-1402. @







# Together **WE WILL**

**On Sept. 11**

ordinary, everyday working men and women stepped forward as heroes and heroines.

They lived their values: caring for others, sacrificing for others, putting their skills to work to save lives, rescue families, heal communities and make America strong.

**Dec. 3–6,**

at the **AFL-CIO** Biennial Convention, we will honor the extraordinary efforts of working men and women on and after Sept. 11—and the everyday heroes and heroines of our movement who fight daily to improve lives for working families.

We will come together to put our voices, our values and our vision to work to build respect for work and to strengthen families, communities and our nation.

**Join us.**

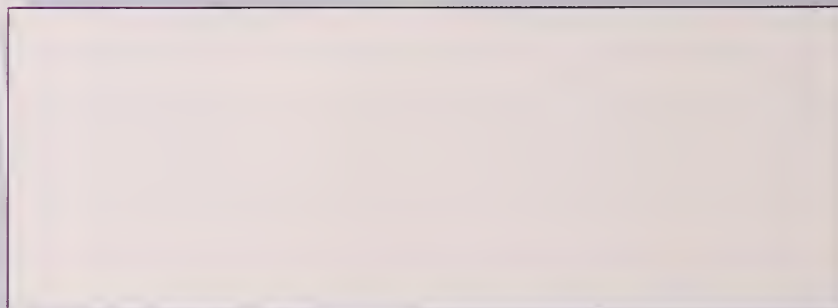


- ▶ **Union Cities and State Federations Conference:** Dec. 1–2
- ▶ **AFL-CIO Civil and Human Rights Conference:** Dec. 2–3
- ▶ **AFL-CIO Executive Council Meeting:** Dec. 3
- ▶ **AFL-CIO Biennial Convention:** Dec. 3–6

**Paris/Bally's Hotel  
Las Vegas, Nevada**

For delegate registration information, call 202-637-5252.

For hotel information, call 202-637-5225.





Ideas, Info and Ammo for AFL-CIO Leaders and Activists

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2001

# America @work



## Union City USA

ALSO INSIDE:  
Getting Back  
to Work

SPECIAL CONVENTION ISSUE



**"WE ARE UPSET** to see the recent articles lauding Marriott as one of *Working Mother* magazine's '100 Best Companies for Working Mothers.' ...Marriott has continually said 'No' to [family-friendly] proposals in our negotiations for a first union contract. In San Francisco, the real 'family-friendly' standard...is set by the hotel companies working in partnership with the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Union."—*Marriott Working Mothers: Laura Barrera, Josephine Rivera, Serena Yu, Nenita Santos Calm, Yolanda Martinez and Helen Wong, San Francisco*

## SAY WHAT?

### How has being part of a Union City boosted your union's organizing, bargaining or political action?

Write, fax or e-mail your thoughts about this month's Say What? Selected responses will appear in a future issue. America@work, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; phone: 202-637-5010; fax: 202-508-6908; e-mail: [atwork@afcio.org](mailto:atwork@afcio.org).

## HERE'S WHAT YOU SAY

### ABOUT HOW YOUR UNION RESPONDED TO THE SEPT. 11 TRAGEDY:

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The following example is among the thousands of responses by unions and their members to the Sept. 11 tragedy. Working families have contributed kneepads, helmet liners and flag stickers for Ground Zero workers; created space for American Red Cross centers; and donated food and millions of dollars to those affected by the disaster.

**"MEMBERS OF THE** Tennessee/Kentucky District of UNITE wanted to do their part [and sent] what they could to the District, which donated the money to Knoxville Glove Company...The [c]ompany...[offered to] provide gloves at or below cost.... To date, \$3,000 worth of [heavy-duty work]

gloves have been purchased by UNITE members [at the Knoxville Glove Company] and donations continue to come in...."

—Brenda Tipton, UNITE, Knoxville, Tenn.

**"FLIGHT ATTENDANTS ARE** off the public radar screen. Many returned to work with no critical incident stress debriefing, no calls from the industry asking how they were doing, no further training in dealing with another terrorist incident. [President] Bush made a big media presentation at O'Hare [airport] in Chicago praising airline employees. Then Congress bailed out the airline industry with no provision for laid-off flight attendants and other employees. Thank you for your support of funding for laid-off airline employees."

—D.C., retired AFSCME member, Madison, Wis.

**"THANKS FOR ALL** the recent hard work you and all your membership has [done in the wake of Sept. 11]...God bless America."—*Thomas Somermeier, former Fire Fighters member, Graton, Calif*

**"IN THE AFTERMATH** of Sept. 11, we watched and read the national media's efforts to take our hard-won liberty in exchange for the illusion of security. Already it is happening. We cannot allow the work of career-building politicians and media-incited people to alter our civil liberties, our basic freedoms or change the way we function as a democratic society—or we will have lost the war."—*James R. McClean, Machinists Local Lodge 971, W. Palm Beach, Fla.*

Correction: The photo in "Class Strategies," Sept. America@work, identified as Gezelle Oliver was of Deborah Rusiski.

**AFL-CIO affiliates are encouraged to reprint or excerpt articles in America@work.**



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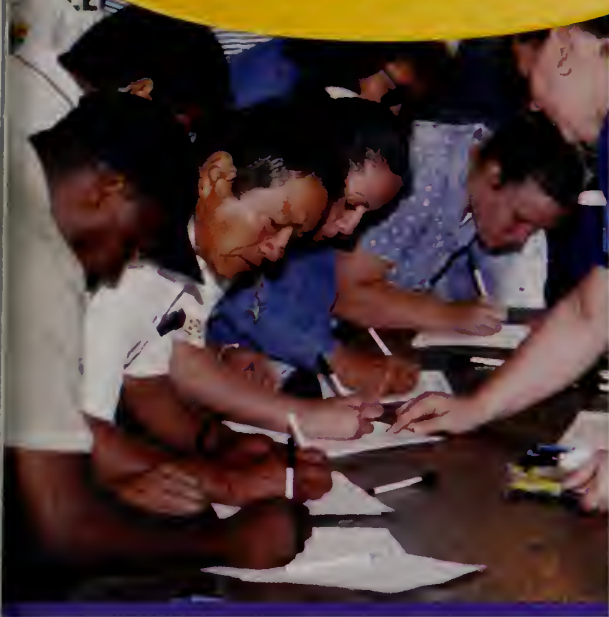
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## Workers Respond to Anthrax Threat

Unions representing employees at the U.S. Postal Service, newspapers and television stations responded quickly to the threat their members face from anthrax bacteria sent through the U.S. mail. The Postal Workers, the Letter Carriers, the Mail Handlers division of the Laborers, The Newspaper Guild/Communications Workers of America and the Television and Radio Artists supplied information to members on the bacteria, preventative safety procedures and online resources. The Postal Workers also provided their members a safety hotline number (888-529-1029).

By early November, four people had died from pulmonary anthrax, including two Postal Workers, Joseph Curseen Jr., 47, of Clinton, Md., and Thomas L. Morris Jr.,

55, of Suitland, Md. Six more victims, including three postal employees, were being treated for inhalation anthrax.

The USPS has tested more than 7,000 postal employees for anthrax exposure, conducted environmental testing at scores of post offices and provided workers with gloves and filtering masks. Its website, [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com), details the protective measures under way and provides links to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other helpful sites.

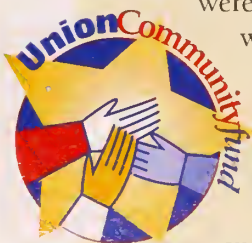
Postal Workers locals in New York and South Florida sued the USPS Oct. 29 to get certain postal facilities checked for anthrax. In New York, the union wanted USPS to close the city's largest mail-sorting center, where traces of anthrax were found on four machines. ☐

## Union Community Fund: Meeting the Need

Union members continue to give generously to help victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. More than 2,000 union donors have contributed more than \$2 million to the AFL-CIO Union Community Fund's September 11th Relief Fund, including a \$50,000 donation by PACE International Union.

The fund allocated the first \$560,000 to meet immediate needs such as housing, food and job counseling. Some of the funds also were used to address the special needs of immigrant workers and to help fund neighborhood and community organizations.

Union-based charitable organizations also have developed new partnerships with foundations to ensure immigrant workers—who are not eligible for many of the benefits available to other workers and are fearful of seeking aid—have access to public and private relief services. The Rockefeller Foundation gave a \$500,000 grant for a joint Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees-SEIU project. The 45-day effort includes hiring 100 laid-off workers to go door-to-door in targeted neighborhoods to help locate workers who need assistance. The project also includes paid advertising in ethnic media and a multi-language hotline immigrant workers can call anonymously seeking help. ☐



Making history: AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka applauds UNITE member and Up-To-Date Laundry worker Wanda Williams during the New Alliance meeting.

## A New Alliance

Maryland and Washington, D.C., union leaders took a bold step Oct. 24 toward building a strong, unified union movement by unanimously becoming the third state federation to approve plans for a New Alliance. New York and North Carolina union leaders passed New Alliance plans in June.

Activists agreed on new leadership structures to increase diversity, creating seats for representatives of AFL-CIO constituency groups on a new state federation executive council. The newly restructured federation also will include an activist mobilization network and an organizing committee with a full-time staff to oversee research

and support for organizing.

"I have never been so proud to be a union member as I am today," Carvel Mays, president of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 27, told New Alliance delegates.

The day following the New Alliance convocation, delegates again made history by electing the state's first African American and first woman to its two top leadership posts. Fred Mason, former AFL-CIO Maryland state director, becomes the second African American president of a state federation, joining James Andrews of North Carolina. Donna Edwards, president of AFSCME Council 92 and Local 112, was elected secretary-treasurer. ☐

## STEPS FOR STEEL

Steelworkers are hailing an October ruling by the International Trade Commission that the flow of cheap steel imports has seriously injured the steel industry.

The vote by the independent federal panel paves the way for a second phase of review to be completed by Dec. 19, during which the ITC will make recommendations to the Bush administration on appropriate remedies for the injury. Among the possibilities are import quotas, tariffs or a combination of the two. After receiving the ITC's recommendations, the administration has until February 2002 to decide what actions to take.

USWA President Leo Gerard praised the ITC for providing some hope for the "27,000 union members who have been forced out of their jobs and the 600,000 retirees whose benefits have been put at risk by the predatory practices of our trading partners.

"Now the ITC needs to move quickly to recommend an effective set of remedies the president can put into action before any further damage is done," Gerard says. ☐



## Court Puts PLAs Back on Track

In a victory for building and construction trades workers, a federal judge in November overturned President Bush's executive order banning all project labor agreements on federal and federally funded construction projects. The judge ruled Bush "lacked the requisite authority" to issue the order and the order "in its entirety is preempted by the National Labor Relations Act."

Issued in February, Bush's ban on project labor agreements was one of several anti-worker executive orders he issued shortly after taking office. The AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department filed suit in U.S. District Court to overturn the order.

"The administration was attacking our unions and our way of doing business. We are pleased that the court ruled in favor of working families," says BCTD President Edward Sullivan.

Project labor agreements generally set wages and establish work rules and methods of settling grievances on large construction projects. @



BCTD President  
Edward Sullivan

## SPOTLIGHT

## A Voice@Work for 12,000 Home Care Workers

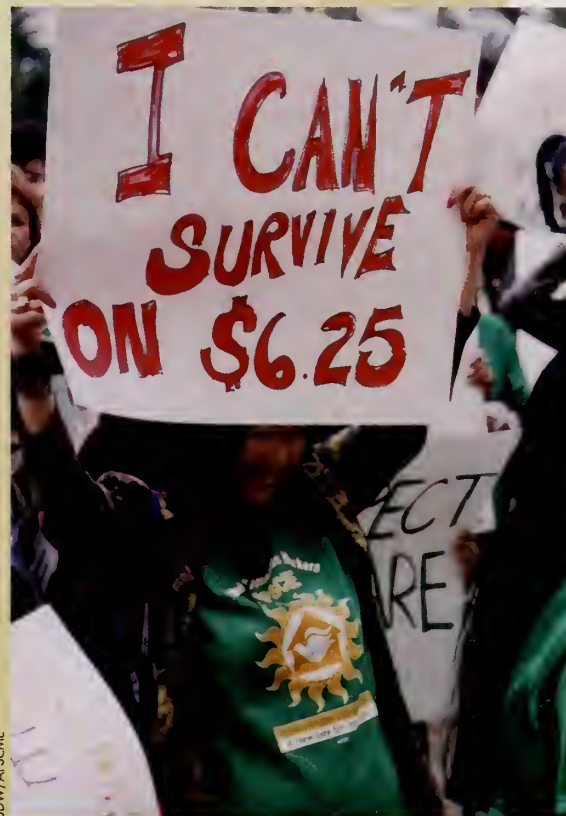
As the nation's population grows older, home care workers provide a vital service for the elderly and people with disabilities, helping them with such basic needs as bathing, feeding, dressing, house cleaning and shopping. But they usually are paid the minimum wage with no benefits. In San Diego County, more than 12,000 home care workers took a big step toward getting justice on the job, with 91 percent of the workers voting in October to join AFSCME-affiliated United Domestic Workers.

"These home care workers were working in conditions that were tantamount to plantation slavery," says UDW/AFSCME President Ken Seaton-Msemaji. "This victory is a huge milestone." The workers, who made \$6.25 an hour, now will make \$8.50 and have health benefits for the first time, he says.

"We need decent wages so that we can continue to do our work," says home care worker Dolores Holstad. "I believe that God wants us to care for those who can't take care of themselves. It's a real job and we deserve respect."

The home care workers won this victory, Seaton-Msemaji says, because of strong support from the San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council, SEIU and other unions. UDW/AFSCME and SEIU agreed to work together to organize home care workers rather than compete with each other.

"We need to join together to organize," Seaton-Msemaji says. "Then everybody wins." @



UDW/AFSCME

**Victory:** Home care workers won a voice at work with UDW/AFSCME in an effort supported by SEIU and the San Diego labor council.

## Aviation Unions Call for Stronger Security

The nation's major aviation unions—Airline Pilots, Flight Attendants and Air Traffic Controllers—say new security procedures passed by Congress are a good first step, but more stringent measures are needed to protect the flying public and aviation workers.

The legislation, passed in October, calls for a stronger law enforcement presence at airports and on planes, new screening and security procedures for baggage, better training for security screeners and allowing pilots to carry approved firearms.

In testimony before both the House and Senate, ALPA President Capt. Duane Woerth outlined a 21-point security blueprint covering onboard and on-the-ground measures. He called for "instituting the most

advanced civil aviation security system in the world."

AFA President Patricia Friend stressed the need for tough baggage security measures. "All checked bags must be screened, not just a few in spot checks. Positive passenger bag match must be required. If a person is not on the aircraft, that person's bag must come off," she says.

NATCA is calling for tighter security measures at the nation's 325 air traffic control facilities. "Our controllers should be watching their radar scopes, not their backs," says NATCA President John Carr.

At its October Executive Board meeting, the AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department urged Congress and the Transportation Department to act swiftly to improve security in aviation and other transportation. @



**W**orking families from New Jersey to Washington State and points between mobilized for off-year elections Nov. 6 and made sure their voices were heard and their votes counted in important state and local races. The months-long efforts by AFL-CIO state federations, central labor councils and local unions concentrated on voter registration drives, worksite visits and leafleting, precinct walks and phone banks to provide information to union members and organize a large-scale get-out-the-vote mobilization.

The work paid off with capture of the Virginia governorship for the first time in more than a decade with the election of Mark Warner (D) and control of the New Jersey legislature after eight years in the minority with a new 44-36 majority in the State Assembly and a 20-20 State Senate split. With the November elections, more than 2,500 union members now hold public office.

Other working family Election Day wins include:

- James McGreevey (D) voted in as New Jersey governor and 29 union-member candidates elected in state and local New Jersey races.
- The election of Jane Campbell (D) as mayor of Cleveland along with 16 city council candidates who pledged their support for a Workers' Bill of Rights.
- Shirley Clarke Franklin taking office as Atlanta mayor.
- Passage of Initiative 775 in Washington State that will regulate the home health care industry by establishing minimum qualifications, providing training, recruiting workers and making the 14,000 home health care workers now classified as independent contractors employees of a new Home



**Getting elected:** AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson joins union members, including Painters and Allied Trades members, in a successful get-out-the-vote effort for Virginia Gov.-elect Mark Warner.

Care Quality Authority with the right to a voice at work.

- Teamsters Local 633 member Bob Baines voted in as mayor of Manchester, N.H., and union members elected to six of the city's 12 alderman seats.
- Flight Attendant Council 9 member Gail Rodesevich elected to the Pueblo County (Colo.) School Board, that recently has been dominated by extreme far-right members. @

## Health Insurance Costs Soar

**W**ith premiums for employer-sponsored health insurance showing the largest increase since 1992, workers face much greater contributions in premium costs, according to an annual survey of more than 1,900 employer health benefit plans by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Health Research and Educational Trust. Released in September, the survey also found that 65 percent of employers offer their workers health insurance, down from 67 percent in 2000.

The average annual premium shared by employers and employees early this year was \$2,650 for single coverage and \$7,053 for a family, up from \$2,387 and \$6,354. In the short term, employers are likely to control costs by passing them on to workers: Seventy-five percent of large firms and 42 percent of small firms

say they are "very" or "somewhat likely" to do so in 2002.

"Unions are heading for big fights over health premiums at the bargaining table in the next couple of years," predicts John Abraham, senior associate director of research for the American Federation of Teachers.

One solution, suggests Ruth Antoniades, associate executive director of the Labor Health Alliance in New York, is multiunion health purchasing cooperatives—such as the health alliance, which represents more than 800,000 members belonging to 30 different unions—that take advantage of volume buying power.

"Unions should be sharing information with each other about plan design, quality of care issues and public-private partnerships such as the State Children's Health Insurance Program that provide benefits for working families." @

## CHARLESTON 5 FREE AT LAST

**I**n a major victory for workers' rights, the union dockworkers known as the Charleston 5 are free after enduring nearly two years of house arrest and false felony charges. In short court appearances Nov. 7 and 13, the five Longshoremen pled no contest to misdemeanor charges and paid fines of \$100 each. The pleas were not admissions of guilt.

The charges grew out of a January 2000 peaceful union protest against nonunion workers unloading a ship in

the Charleston, S.C., harbor. After the marchers were confronted by more than 600 heavily armed police, local police charged eight of them with minor offenses, but state Attorney General Charlie Condon intervened and secured felony indictments—which carry long prison sentences—against five marchers from a secret grand jury. While the felony charges were pending, the men were confined to their homes between 7 p.m. and 6 a.m., unless they were at work or at a union function.

A broad coalition of community and civil rights activists from groups such as the South Carolina Progressive Network and the NAACP stood with union activists in defense of all Americans' fundamental rights to assemble peaceably, form unions, participate in politics and make a decent living at a safe job. The groundwork for the pleas and ultimate freedom was laid when Condon, a candidate for governor, withdrew from the case. @



AFL-CIO  
CONVENTION  
LAS VEGAS 2001

## America's Workers *Heroes Every Day*

# AFL-CIO Convention Will Honor Union Heroes

**A** FSCME EMTs were among the first at the scene at the World Trade Center after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. "The only traffic going toward the towers was the firefighters, the EMTs, the medics, the cops," says Joseph Conzo, an EMT and member of AFSCME District Council 37/Local 2507. "All union people were going straight into danger.

There's strength in numbers and if all the unions come together, there's nothing we can't do."

Conzo will be among the union heroes highlighted at the AFL-CIO 2001 Convention in December, as the union movement celebrates America's Workers, Heroes Every Day.

For complete, as-it-happens Convention coverage, visit [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org). @



**Hero:** EMT Joseph Conzo, a member of AFSCME District Council 37/Local 2507, will be among union heroes highlighted at the AFL-CIO Convention in Las Vegas.

## Actors Who Dub in Spanish Join AFTRA

**H**umberto Amor is not a household name in the United States, but the thousands of viewers who watch the Spanish-language television version of the popular CBS soap opera "The Bold and the Beautiful" know his work. Amor, who dubs the dialogue of character Ridge Forrester, is among a growing field of actors who dub in Spanish.

In mid-October, Amor and nearly two dozen co-workers at Point.360's postproduction facility in Burbank, Calif., became the first such group to work under a union contract.

Their effort to form a union with Television and Radio Artists gained the support of

Screen Actors John McCook and Susan Flannery, two stars of "The Bold and the Beautiful," who demanded a meeting with CBS management to push for a union contract. "The actors who were dubbing us were working for substandard wages without benefits and if they pressed to be unionized, they might have their jobs sent to Mexico," McCook said in a statement issued by the union.

Five years ago, when the dubbing actors tried to join a union, much of their work was moved to Mexico, the union said. Under the new contract, the actors earn \$16 an hour for a minimum of three hours a day. @

## OUT FRONT

**T**ogether in Las Vegas, the working women and men of the AFL-CIO Convention are putting in place the building blocks of a larger, stronger union movement. And we need every member of every AFL-CIO union to unite in a major new commitment.

We have more than a hundred years of movement history behind us, generations of union heroes and heroines to inspire us, the energy of young and diverse voices to energize us and the power of solidarity to propel us. We know what we must do. And together we will do it.

To extend the benefits of union membership to more workers and give organized workers the powerful voice we deserve in workplaces, politics, the economy and our communities, our unions will invest more resources in organizing, use our power and expertise to organize and bargain for real growth and change the organizing environment. And we call on each of our members to reach out to unorganized workers whose lives will be better with a voice at work.

To make working families' voices heard in politics, we will educate and mobilize union households as never before, register more union household members and connect politics and organizing so we can increase the number of union voters, continue to elect union members to office and in all ways build on Labor 2000 success to make new gains through Labor 2002. And we urge every union member to base his or her votes on working family issues and hold elected leaders accountable all year long.

To reshape this economy so it works for working families, we will demand that our leaders help put America back to work, address our industrial and manufacturing crisis, improve service-sector jobs and value public-sector work while changing the rules of the global economy. And each union member must join us in demanding that our leaders at every level respect those of us, in every part of the globe, who create wealth at least as much as those who hold and spend it.

To give workers a voice in their communities and build robust union movements in every corner of America, we will build and nurture community alliances and mobilize locally to support organizing and worker-friendly candidates.

We will commit ourselves to winning safer and healthier workplaces, jobs that strengthen rather than sap families and opportunities to grow within our work. And we encourage all union members to refuse to accept less than a society that respects work, strengthens family and builds community.

We are ending an extremely trying, painful—sometimes monstrous—year.

But we are entering a new age with hope and strength. Together. @

## Building for the Future



BY JOHN J. SWEENEY



# GETTING BACK TO WORK

By JANE BIRNBAUM

**A**s the number of American workers laid off or facing joblessness since Sept. 11 exceeded 650,000 by Nov. 14—including more than 211,000 union members, according to the AFL-CIO Corporate Affairs Department—unions nationwide have stepped up large-scale economic outreach and support efforts.

This activity became even more urgent in early November when the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics announced that unemployment had soared to 5.4 percent in October, up from 4.9 percent in September. According to an Oct. 31 report from the Economic Policy Institute, the nation's unemployment insurance system is about to be severely tested and "is poised to fail unless states act immediately to raise weekly benefits."

Nearly 136,000 jobs have been lost in the hospitality, tourism and entertainment industries—and union members have been hit hard. Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees estimates one-third of its members, many of them low-paid immigrant workers, have lost their jobs. More than 129,000 jobs have been cut in transportation, affecting workers belonging to unions that include the Air Line Pilots, Communications Workers of America, Flight Attendants, Machinists, Teamsters and Transport Workers.

Workers as far from the terrorist attacks as California and Nevada are experiencing layoffs and hours cut back. In Las Vegas,

Project Helping Hands, a coalition of charitable groups led by HERE Local 226, reached out to approximately 30,000 newly unemployed hotel and casino workers by setting up a one-stop center for critical benefits and services.

Unemployed Nevadans typically must spend half a day on the telephone to begin the unemployment insurance process, but Project Helping Hands persuaded the state to bring its benefits staff and computer systems right to Local 226's hall. On Oct. 3, the first day of operation, the center served more than 2,000 workers.

## Food banks in California

Meanwhile in California, the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor Community Services Agency, a partnership between unions and the United Way, is holding "When the Paycheck Stops" workshops to enable activists to run their own community services programs.

"The workshop gave us everything we needed to tell our members how to do things like file for unemployment benefits and keep housing and utilities going," says Darwin Finley, a United Airlines reservationist and Machinists Local Lodge 1932 committee chair. His local union now counts about 1,000 laid-off airline employees. (The workshop is based on the AFL-CIO booklet *When the Paycheck Stops*, which can be found online at [www.aflcio.org/paycheck/index.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/paycheck/index.htm).)

By late October, the agency had bought more than 100,000 pounds of food and distributed it to approximately 12,000 Teamsters, Machinists and HERE members left jobless in the wake of Sept. 11. And for L.A. job-seekers referred to county-run job centers, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1277 chipped in, donating 2,000 bus tokens.

## Helping workers stay solvent

Hardest hit are workers in the New York City area, where the Fiscal Policy Institute predicted 105,200 jobs lost in the first three months after the attacks. The Employment Clearinghouse Program—spearheaded in part by the New York State AFL-CIO and

the New York City Central Labor Council—was slated to serve nearly 5,000 job-seekers by mid-October. Job postings and employer pledges meant the clearinghouse had nearly 6,000 job orders.

Unions in the Washington, D.C., area also are helping job-hunting workers stay solvent. The Virginia State AFL-CIO persuaded the state to set up a one-stop center at National Airport for 12,000 workers temporarily displaced there and for the thousands more who lost jobs in tourist-related industries. The state federation mobilized members and legislators to lobby Gov. Jim Gilmore (R) to increase unemployment benefits by \$100 per week for workers who have been laid off in Virginia since Sept. 9.

In mid-October, the Washington Metropolitan Council AFL-CIO Community Services Agency persuaded the Council of the District of Columbia to increase monthly unemployment benefits from 50 percent to 70 percent of base income for approximately 16,000 laid-off hotel and restaurant workers. The agency also has given approximately \$170,000 in cash assistance to workers looking for jobs. And in early November, the District of Columbia's Department of Employment Services set up in the AFL-CIO cafeteria a one-stop center for displaced workers.

At Disney World in Orlando, Fla., where hundreds of part-time workers lost their jobs while thousands of full-time workers were forced into part-time positions, the Central Florida Central Labor Council is setting up a one-stop center for dislocated Disney workers at HERE Local 362's hall.

"Gov. Jeb Bush is in the process of cutting \$1.38 billion out of the state budget," says labor council Vice President Carl Booth, an Electrical Workers Local 108 member. "The same amount he's given in tax relief to the wealthy over three years."

For workers coast to coast, coping with layoffs has been a painful experience, says Jim Arnold, HERE Local 226 secretary-treasurer. "But we've learned from it," he adds. "It's taught us we must always be prepared to take action quickly in difficult times." ☐



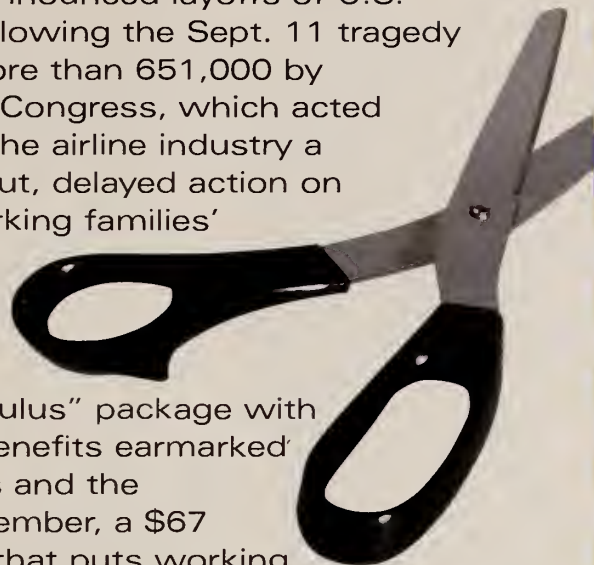
One-stop: Project Helping Hands, led by HERE Local 226, is aiding thousands of laid-off hotel and casino workers in Las Vegas at a one-stop center for benefits and services.

MARK ZARTARIAN



## Bailouts for Big Business, Layoffs for Workers

**A**ctual and announced layoffs of U.S. workers following the Sept. 11 tragedy reached more than 651,000 by mid-November. Congress, which acted quickly to give the airline industry a \$15 billion bailout, delayed action on recognizing working families' plight. In late October, the House passed a \$100 billion economic "stimulus" package with 90 percent of benefits earmarked for corporations and the wealthy. In November, a \$67 billion package that puts working families first was killed in the Senate. The AFL-CIO encouraged Senate supporters to expand unemployment and health care benefits for unemployed workers, assist states struggling to maintain safety net benefits and invest in the nation's infrastructure to create new jobs and fill long-unmet needs.



### Resources for Workers

While Congress rushes to support Big Business, union activists are fighting the economic attack on workers by sharing financial resources, support and information:

A step-by-step guide to layoff survival from the AFL-CIO, *When the Paycheck Stops*, is available in booklet form online at [www.aflcio.org/paycheck/index.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/paycheck/index.htm). To order the English or Spanish print version, available as a booklet or as a more detailed report, call the AFL-CIO Support Services Department at 800-442-5645.

*Economic Alert*, an AFL-CIO weekly report on job losses, legislation and actions by unions helping workers, is available online at [www.aflcio.org/sept\\_11/econchart.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/sept_11/econchart.htm).

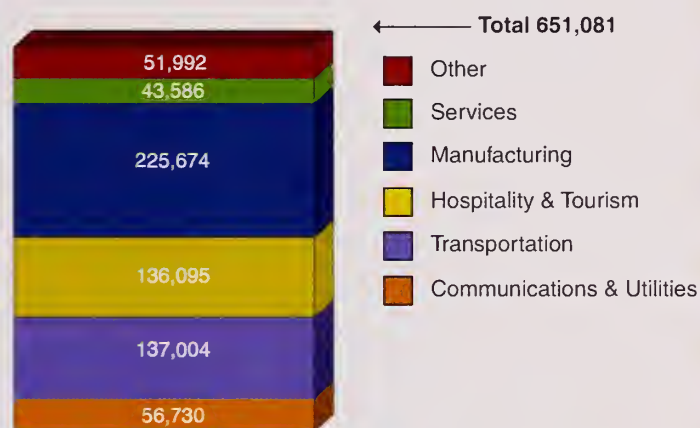
The Economic Policy Institute offers an online calculator that allows workers to learn the amount of unemployment insurance they will receive if laid off. Click on [www.epinet.org](http://www.epinet.org).

The AFL-CIO Working for America Institute website offers in-depth information, tips and resources in its online layoff survival kit. Click on [www.workingforamerica.org/news/story.asp?ArticleID=22](http://www.workingforamerica.org/news/story.asp?ArticleID=22).

## Rolling Layoffs Devastate Workers

The steepest job losses since Sept. 11 are in the hospitality and tourism industries, followed closely by cuts among aviation and manufacturing workers. For up-to-date information on layoffs, visit the AFL-CIO website layoff tracker: [www.aflcio.org/sept\\_11/econchart.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/sept_11/econchart.htm).

All Announced Layoffs, Sept. 11, 2001, Through Nov. 1, 2001

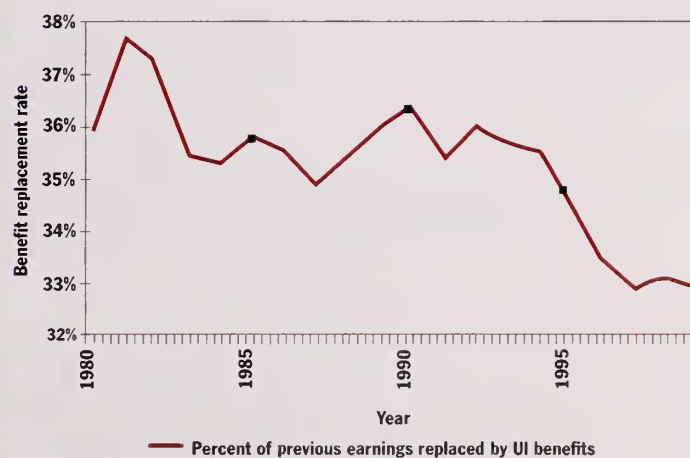


Source: AFL-CIO Department of Corporate Affairs from press reports

## Unemployment Benefits at 20-Year Low

The best measure of states' unemployment insurance benefit adequacy is how much of a worker's lost income it replaces. On average, UI now replaces less than a third of lost income—and in most states, even those meager benefits run out after 26 weeks.

Erosion of Unemployment Insurance Benefits, 1980-2000



Source: The Economic Policy Institute





# Union City USA

**Central labor councils are energizing and mobilizing  
union and community activists to create  
Union Cities across the nation.**





**D**eborah Lacey-Zuelsdorf, secretary-treasurer of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 315, knows what it takes to create a Union City—and what happens after activists start down that road. “There has been such a turnaround in the union movement in San Diego since we began Union Cities.” When union members from different unions work together for each other’s goals, Lacey-Zuelsdorf says, it raises standards for working families throughout the community.

Building a Union City means working families have a stronger voice at the workplace, in their communities and throughout the halls of power. A Union City is a better place to live and work. With Union Cities in action:

◆ Hundreds of thousands of workers from dozens of unions across Los Angeles speak with one voice in a countywide bargaining campaign that results in stronger contracts across the board.

◆ Kansas City, Mo., nurses—forced by ruthless cost cutting to supply food for patients at their own expense—receive the union and community backing they need to stand up to a multimillion-dollar corporation and win a voice at work.

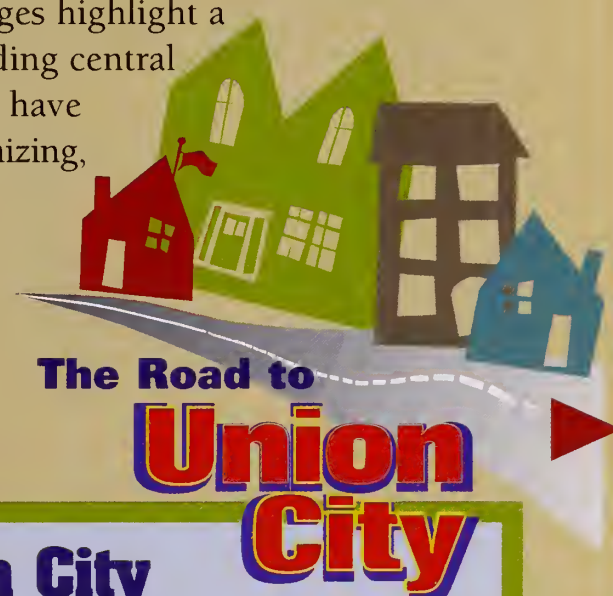
◆ Activists—1,000-strong—from 45 affiliated unions in Denver join together to elect working family-friendly lawmakers to prevent passage of a statewide “right to work” law.

From Los Angeles to Kansas City, Mo., Denver to Washington, D.C., central labor councils are energizing their outreach efforts and mobilizing union and community activists for high-powered organizing, bargaining and political action to improve the lives of working families in cities across the nation.

In 1997, the unions of the AFL-CIO joined with central labor councils in launching the Union Cities initiative to strengthen local unions and the union movement community by community. Today, more than 160 local labor councils in 43 states are working to meet the Union Cities goals.

Delegates to the 2001 AFL-CIO Convention will recognize communities that have met the Union Cities goals and acknowledge labor councils that have stepped forward to implement at least one of the key Union Cities strategies.

The following pages highlight a few of the outstanding central labor councils that have combined the organizing, political action, community outreach and member mobilization that together make a Union City. ☺



## Seven Strategies for Reaching Union City

**T**he road to Union City starts when a central labor council passes an official resolution agreeing to pursue seven strategies to steer it on its course. Central labor council leaders then call on the AFL-CIO for assistance in putting together a plan.

These strategies include:

- Supporting affiliate unions’ organizing efforts.
- Mobilizing 1 percent of members for *Street Heat* actions to support other workers’ struggles.
- Taking grassroots political action, including increasing voter registration and turnout.
- Building union–community alliances with faith-based, civil rights and women’s organizations.
- Demanding diversity on labor councils and state federations.
- Training a new generation of leaders.
- Raising a public voice for working families through media events and regular communication with activists.

For a more detailed look at the strategies for reaching Union City, visit [www.aflcio.org/unioncity/stepsto.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/unioncity/stepsto.htm). ☺



Syracuse, N.Y.



PAUL DOMEO/UFCW LOCAL 1

# MOBILIZING to Organize

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

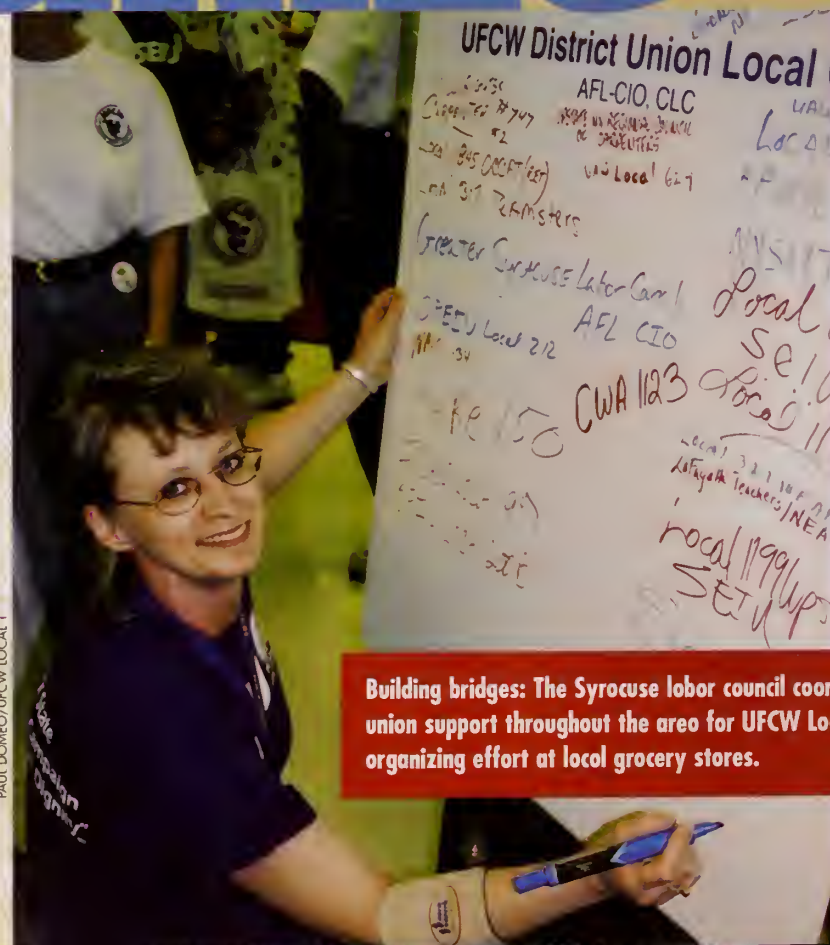
After leaders in New York State remapped the state's union organizations in June 2001 as part of the New Alliance initiative, the Greater Syracuse Labor Council, with its proven track record in aiding organizing, was catapulted into an even bigger leadership role as a central labor council. The New Alliance, the AFL-CIO program to revamp state federations and central labor councils, encourages union leaders to tailor plans that will better engage all union organizations in organizing and political action. In New York, leaders created five powerhouse area labor federations, bringing together central labor councils in regional groups. The Syracuse labor council is now part of the Central New York Labor Federation.

Ever since adopting a Union Cities strategic plan five years ago, the Greater Syracuse Labor Council has confronted employers waging anti-union battles against workers and strongly supported organizing campaigns: Helping put together meetings and home visits during Teamsters Local 1149's successful 2001 effort at Onondaga Beverage, where 58 truck drivers and warehouse workers won a voice at work. Mobilizing clergy to support the organizing effort of 85 municipal workers in DeWitt, a Syracuse suburb, with the Civil Service Employees Association Local 1000/AFSCME. Assisting UFCW Local 1 with its strategic organizing campaign at grocery stores, including rallies, blitzes and a "shop-in" when activists filled their grocery carts while wearing T-shirts emblazoned with a phone number for workers seeking to form a union.

"The labor council has been a conduit for CSEA to reach out to other unions," says Will Streeter, an organizer on the campaign.

At the same time, the council is building strong *Street Heat* capabilities for the mass mobilization of union members and allies to support organizing and contract campaigns—demonstrating its value to affiliate unions, which in turn makes affiliates more willing to ask for help.

"All the public activity around *Street Heat* has helped raise public awareness of the union movement," says Marshall Blake, president of the labor council and the area federation. "It changes the climate for organizing."



PAUL DOMEO/UFCW LOCAL 1

**Building bridges:** The Syracuse labor council coordinates union support throughout the area for UFCW Local 1's organizing effort at local grocery stores.



## Coalition-building makes it all come together

With the Union Cities blueprint to better focus their efforts, Syracuse union leaders in October 1999—for the first time in seven years—hosted a phone bank for city and county candidates. Today, candidates seeking the council's endorsement must sign a right to organize pledge, promising to support workers trying to form unions. "We took the relationships we had before—where elected officials respected us for our ability to mobilize funds and troops—to the next level," says Mark Spadafore, field organizer for the Syracuse labor council, transforming the relationship from one in which politicians ask unions for endorsements to one in which unions ask elected officials for help in organizing campaigns.

Syracuse activists say coalition-building is a key part of organizing and political action. The recent addition of local chapters of the A. Philip Randolph Institute and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, both AFL-CIO constituency groups, to the council's leadership structure has boosted the labor council's capacity to mobilize for organizing and politics. Members of APRI and CBTU are active in the local living wage campaign, reaching out to their contacts at the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, a coalition of African American clergy, for support of the ordinance.

The labor council also is active in SEIU Local 200 United's "bargaining to organize" campaign at Syracuse University as the union works to include a provision in its contract to allow graduate employees to join the union with an expedited card-check process. Over the years, the labor council built a strong coalition with Syracuse University's anti-sweatshop student group, which sought to get administrators to join the Workers Rights Consortium, a strong sweatshop monitoring organization. SEIU's organizing campaign reached a turning point after a leader of the labor council's building trades affiliates told administrators his unions would stop advertising on campus for apprentices unless the university reformed its practices.

Steelworkers benefited from the cooperation fostered by the labor council during an organizing campaign at Eagle Comtronics in spring 2000. Organizers from a range of unions shared ideas and campaign responsibilities at an organizers' roundtable sponsored by the labor council, while area union members joined activists from

## FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

### Organizing for Strength

*United Food and Commercial Workers President Douglas Dority and SEIU President Andrew L. Stern, co-chairmen of the AFL-CIO Committee on Organizing, address the role of strong Union Cities in helping workers get a voice on the job:*

**"T**he most effective organizing tool is a motivated and activated union membership," says Dority, "and worker-to-worker, community-based organizing is the future for our movement." Dority cites the UFCW organizing effort at grocery stores in Syracuse as an example. "We had the support of the local central body and a commitment from the entire union movement to grow our movement in the area. A stronger movement gives every union a chance to grow larger and stronger."

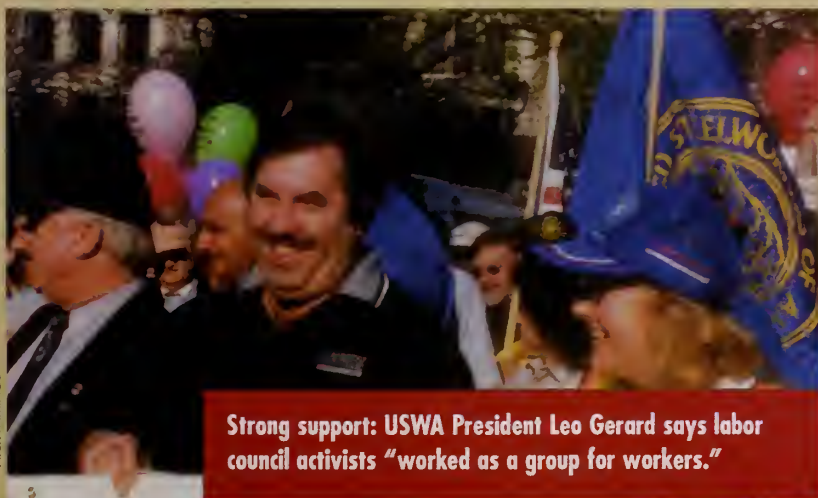
To ensure the future success of Union Cities, labor councils need to build community and political support for organizing. "We have to show elected officials, community leaders and the public that everyone benefits when workers form a union," says Stern. "When workers have the freedom to choose a voice on the job, they can work together to ensure quality services and products, as well as the good jobs, quality health care and retirement security our communities need."

More local unions are reaping the benefits of a higher level of solidarity in their communities. "Movement building means we look beyond the narrow needs and interests of the moment for any one union

and look to the long-term interests and goals of all workers," Dority says. "To meet our duty to our own union, we must give something to build the movement as a whole." ☐



**Co-chairmen: UFCW President Douglas Dority (above left) and SEIU President Andrew Stern.**



**Strong support: USWA President Leo Gerard says labor council activists "worked as a group for workers."**

the plant on house calls. Although the campaign fell short of success, labor council activists "worked as a group and saw that their primary goal was to organize the unorganized—not for the good of individual unions but for workers in general," says USWA President Leo Gerard.

In Syracuse, as in cities across the country, workers and local unions do the hard work of organizing for a voice on the job. But in Union Cities such as Syracuse, increasingly strong labor councils are bringing together unions with workers in a variety of jobs and allies from across the community to play crucial roles in supporting organizing and shining a spotlight on workers' efforts for justice on the job. ☐



## ★ Kansas City, Mo.



# SPOTLIGHT ON Kansas City, Mo.

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

*"The council is viewed as a major force in the political landscape."*

—Kansas City Mayor  
Kay Barnes

**A**fter the Health Midwest chain began buying up hospitals in the Kansas City area, administrators cut staff, limited access to crucial supplies and often canceled the nighttime janitorial shift, according to several news accounts. These bottom-line moves left nurses sprinting from patient to patient, supplying shampoo and baby food for patients at their own expense and wielding mops to clean up after messy—sometimes bloody—medical procedures.

"There used to be committees where managers would listen to nurses' input," says Donna Skouse, an RN in the gastrointestinal unit of Menorah Hospital, part of the Health Midwest chain. "In the



last 10 years, there's been a huge turn away from that and now everything is so financially driven." Fed up, nurses reached out to AFT's Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals and formed Nurses United for Improved Patient Care.

The nurses and AFT organizers launched a spirited organizing campaign that so far has yielded union victories among 510 workers at three hospitals—even in the face of an aggressive anti-union campaign by the company that included threats, intimidation and the formation of a fake, pro-company "union," according to a July 2001 National Labor Relations Board administrative law judge ruling. They now are negotiating contracts at Lee Summit, Menorah and Medical Center of Independence while stepping up organizing campaigns at the chain's other hospitals, which employ about 2,000 more nurses.

### Coordinating and mobilizing

The Greater Kansas City AFL-CIO brought into play its capacity as a central coordinator of unions—and allies of working families—to aid the nurses' struggle throughout the area. With its access to information about working families in Kansas City, the labor council collected data from local affiliates showing union members are spending \$18.5 million a year at Health Midwest facilities, information demonstrating the clout working families have with the company. The labor council also was equipped with the tools needed to mail questionnaires and make follow-up phone calls to members. "That's a role labor councils can play in any organizing campaign," says Bridgette Williams, president of the Greater Kansas City AFL-CIO.

As part of its Union Cities outreach, the labor council also mobilized its allies in the community, congregations and political power centers, collecting signatures from community leaders for an open letter supporting the nurses and hosting a forum for nurses, elected officials and consumers to discuss the difficulty in providing quality health care. In July 2001, the labor council helped mobilize 500 activists for a rally immediately prior to the union election at the Medical Center of Independence. A few days later, the nurses won by a 2-1 margin. "When we were out there at rallies, supporters from other unions really increased our numbers," says Skouse. "Management sees that and says, 'Wow.' Health Midwest is a big, powerful corporation, so it helps to know it's not just nurses alone dealing with it."

Local clergy members played an important role in supporting the nurses. Some 25 religious leaders signed the letter backing the nurses' right to organize free from employer interference, and six religious leaders formed a monitoring committee to track allegations of labor law violations leading up to the union election at MCI. To ensure the community was aware of the committee, they held a news conference to announce its formation.

### Channeling political strength

As the nurses at other facilities continue their organizing drive, the labor council channels its political strength to mobilize support from elected officials—and that includes convincing the mayor and city council to pass a resolution in support of the nurses' freedom to join a union. "The political and religious leaders say they see the

decline in quality of care when they visit people at the hospital," says Skouse. "Having them involved validates our goals and efforts."

The labor council laid the foundation for garnering support from elected officials by holding a series of meetings with members of Congress, state representatives and local city council members to open their eyes to the obstacles workers face when they try to form unions, implementing a key component of the AFL-CIO Voice@Work campaign. That initiative aims to educate political, community and religious leaders about union organizing and involve them in local struggles. The meetings bore fruit when two state representatives who had not signed a petition recognizing the rights of nurses to organize did so after a meeting with union leaders.

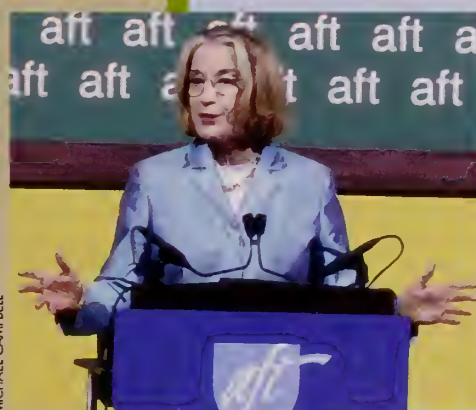
The labor council's political strength is leading to concrete victories for working families. In June, Gov. Bob Holden (D) signed an executive order giving state workers first-time bargaining rights. Union leaders estimate 30,000 workers could win a voice on the job as a result of the new rule. Activists galvanized by the labor council leaflet worksites with issue-oriented fliers and elect union members who run for public office. Today, union members serve on the city council, the Jackson County and state legislatures and the school board. For city council candidates to get the labor council's endorsement, they have to support the right of workers to organize. "The council is viewed as a major force in the political landscape," says Kansas City Mayor Kay Barnes. ☐

## Tapping Deep Into Community Connections

**I**t takes more than a few good union organizers to fight off the efforts of a well-financed, extremely anti-union health care system. That's why the central labor council is so essential in our health care organizing campaign in Kansas City. When we need to round up support from political, religious and other community leaders in Kansas City, we turn to the labor council. They can tap right into their deep connections to the community and help us in our efforts on behalf of the nurses. We simply couldn't conduct this campaign without their help.

"All of this help boosts our workers' morale and gives them the courage to continue, especially in the face of multimillion-dollar union-busting campaigns." ☐

—AFT President Sandra Feldman



MICHAEL CAMPBELL



Denver

**Mobilized:** When working family-friendly state lawmakers took office in 2001, Denver activists celebrated the union strength behind their election.

CHRIS TAKAGI  
M O B I L I Z I N G

# for Political Action

BY JANE BIRNBAUM

**B**ob Young, a Plumbers and Pipe Fitters Local 208 member who retired in 1992, has since worked full-time to help make Denver a Union City.

While volunteering as a Labor 2000 coordinator last year, he was paired with an SEIU activist, the first time he had worked with a member from another union. It was a valuable experience, "because we've gotten to know each other and each other's issues," he says.

So now, when Young gets an e-mail from the Denver Area Labor Federation asking him to write to legislators, he fires off letters, sometimes three a week. And as campaign manager for a union-friendly city council candidate in a Denver suburb, he calls on a multiunion network of activists to contact members and visit their homes.

## Building from a core of committed activists

Young is among a core of 1,000 labor council activists who recruit volunteers and generate turnout for political campaigns, union organizing drives and rallies with community and faith-based groups. In 1998, the Denver labor council board agreed on a member mobilization strategy built on a committed base of activists—and it's worked. Today, from among the 85,000 Denver-area members, 1,000 are key activists and 100 are representatives of locals who communicate through monthly council meetings as well as by e-mail and monthly political newsletters. Coming from 45 affiliated locals—up from only 14 in 1998—the activists have transformed Denver into a Union City.

Leslie Moody, labor council president, says the labor council board that came together in 1998 represented union activists and staff from all levels—organizers, local political chairs, some local presidents—who are open to trying new tactics. "People from different Denver unions were willing to come together with different perspectives and strengths."

In November 2000, labor council activists, working with the Colorado AFL-CIO, were key to winning six of eight state senate races in the metropolitan area. Activists visiting worksites and making home visits educated fellow union members about the importance of electing working family-friendly lawmakers to the state senate to ensure the legislature would not pass a so-called right to work



law—which the anti-worker legislature was poised to do. That same bedrock of activists turned out at the state capitol last February to celebrate their candidates taking office.

“Our activists have to work with elected officials and community groups to hold legislators responsible once they’re in office,” says Linda Lee Ariki, a grocery clerk with United Food and Commercial Workers Local 7, who served as a Labor 2000 senate district coordinator. “It’s that kind of continuous shared support that a union is about—more than just a bunch of unions, it’s a labor movement, with multiunion activity plus activity between the unions and the community.”

### Turning vision into action

Denver’s new labor council board first put its vision into practice during the governor’s race in 1998, asking local unions to release staff and members to campaign with the labor council among union households. For the first time, union members reported to the labor movement, not to a candidate. Activists from a variety of unions met and worked together, and they also wound up recruiting volunteers not only from their own unions, but from other locals as well. They lost the governor’s office by half a percentage point—but the labor council learned that locals were willing to work as a team, and local union political organizers liked the idea of multiunion mobilization.

Union activists then put their political action into practice again during a long-term organizing campaign among service workers at Denver public schools. Communications Workers of America Local 7777 sought to organize the school district’s 425 food service workers, but the seven school board members, who had power over whether they could organize, wouldn’t even return activists’ phone calls. Union activists saw only one option: elect board members who would endorse organizing.

First, to create community awareness, the labor council partnered with Jobs with Justice and faith-based groups including the Ministerial Alliance to hold a workers’ rights board hearing where the food service workers told of their low pay and lack of benefits.

Then, with vigorous volunteer support from bilingual and Spanish-speaking parent groups, the labor council recruited and elected two new school board members, who convinced their colleagues that the food service workers should have the right to organize. In mid-1999, 125 part-time custodians voted to join CWA, which today continues to organize the food service workers.

With skills honed in school board and city council races, labor council activists were primed to create the “Colorado Miracle” of November 2000. After talking with 40,000 union members, the campaign was one more escalation of the multiunion strategic campaign union activists had created over two years—a partnership among local unions, the labor council and the state federation.

In 2001, after electing a working family-friendly city council member, the labor council is training its energy on a multiunion organizing campaign—including AFSCME, HERE, Machinists, Teamsters, SEIU and UFCW—at Denver International Airport.

Although speaking specifically about the airport organizing campaign, Lovejoy could be describing Denver’s road to becoming a Union City when he says: “Through the locals’ victories last year, and working hard to create a shared agenda, the locals are now leveraging their power in support of each other.” ☐

## FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

### Political Activism

*As chairman of the AFL-CIO Executive Council’s Committee on Political Education, AFSCME President Gerald McEntee discusses the union movement’s recent successes with political activism and how unions can build on these victories for the future.*



ANDY KING

**Based on the union movement’s growing political momentum over the past few years, how do we expand it from Union Cities like Denver?**

“Last November, there were tremendous successes in Union Cities like Denver, Cleveland and Philadelphia—urban centers where central bodies have become

more activated and grassroots-oriented than ever before. But we’ve only touched the surface in terms of grassroots political activity.

“A Union City is a coordination of strategies. A good operation should obviously have outreach for community, faith-based and constituent groups. When you put that connection together and you take it into the political arena, it’s a big plus, an incredible improvement.”

**When Union Cities are endorsing candidates in the months and years ahead, on what issues should candidates stand with unions?**

“At the top of the list is the candidates’ stand on organizing. If we’d had 10,000 more members in Florida, there wouldn’t have been a presidential recount. We have many such places, where we’d win if only we had more members, which is why this issue is so important.

“We now have an effective political operation that gets out grassroots activists, distributes literature and persuades members to vote the way we consider right for working families. But we don’t have enough members. That’s why organizing is critical to political success.

“Many, many candidates don’t understand this. So when they come in for that interview—and you don’t want to only give them a questionnaire, but talk with them face-to-face—you have to explain it to them. And we need to have more participation from politicians when we have problems.”

**Big Business claims it has adopted the grassroots political strategy that has been so successful in Union Cities. How can we maintain our “people advantage”?**

“Business may attempt to have a grassroots arm, but they will find it very difficult to make it effective because we’re so clearly on the right side of the issues for working families. We have to continue to provide them cogent information about their lives and how our issues, whether it’s prescription drug costs or workplace safety, affect them. People don’t want to be told whom to vote for—they want information. And when Union Cities like Denver give it to them, they’ll vote for the right candidate 75 percent of the time.” ☐



Cleveland



ROADELL HICKMAN

# SPOTLIGHT ON Cleveland

BY JANE BIRNBAUM

**T**his past May, when a coalition of Cleveland government offices, businesses and unions asked citizens to pass a new bond issue to refurbish and repair the city's deteriorated public schools, the Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor's mobilization effort came from behind to win by 59.8 percent to 40.2 percent.

Pulling ahead and ultimately winning an election to help working families and their children is the result of a Union City at work, says Meryl Johnson, a Cleveland Teachers Union/AFT vice president who coordinated her union's participation in the campaign. Forty-thousand union members received at least one phone call from another member who telephoned from the council's state-of-the-art automated phone center. Two dozen of the council's 30 top unions appointed a political coordinator responsible for rounding up volunteers for phone banks, marches and mailings, while shop stewards delivered issues leaflets on the job.

Everybody, including our newspaper, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, acknowledged unions were the driving force behind



**Door-to-door:** Cleveland activists (above and right) turned out for get-out-the-vote efforts in this fall's local mayoral race.

ROADELL HICKMAN





the campaign's success," says John Gallo, coordinator of the council's political education and action committee and a retired medical records worker with AFSCME Local 3360. "And we've gotten much better coverage in the *Plain Dealer* since then."

### Political action plan

The labor council made winning look easy. Since it first implemented a Union Cities strategy of multiunion, member-to-member mobilization three years ago, the council has developed momentum through a unique partnership with Cleveland Jobs with Justice, a coalition of community and faith-based groups.

In 1998, the council had its first big political win when it successfully campaigned for Cuyahoga County commissioner candidate Jimmy Dimora, an underdog who was most responsive to working families' issues. It was a critical race because the county commissioner controls approximately 10,000 jobs, most of them union.

"For the first time in years, the council had a comprehensive worksite plan," recalls council President John Ryan. The council produced customized fliers for member unions. Union leaders called on union households, pairing activists from different unions. "When fellow union members heard from us, face to face, the reasons why it was important to elect Dimora, they felt part of the process," says Jack Hayn, a business representative with Painters and Allied Trades District Council 6.

On Nov. 6, the council achieved a great victory in the election of its endorsed mayoral candidate, Cuyahoga County Commissioner Jane Campbell, who won by a healthy 54-46 percent margin. Together with SEIU Local 47, the council made more than 56,000 phone calls to union members and distributed 72,000 pieces of literature to 43,000 union households in support of Mayor Campbell. Nearly 600 activists participated in "walk and talks," spreading the word personally to union members at home.

Having Campbell in office "puts us in a position of good access to City Hall, complementing the good access we already had with the Cleveland City Council," says Gallo. "And in this economic downturn, when organizing is more important than ever because people's livelihoods are threatened, we're going to need good cooperation between working people and their unions and elected public officials."

### Partners in organizing

While the Cleveland council focuses its mobilization efforts on political campaigns, it partners with Jobs with Justice, which Ryan co-chairs, for issues education and organizing. The council and JwJ share a 1,500-strong database of activists, many of whom signed "I'll be there" pledge cards while at council events, promising to attend five other union actions.

It was this coalition that persuaded the Cleveland City Council to pass a living wage measure unanimously in 2000—\$8.76 an hour going up to \$9.27 in October 2002 for city employees and related workers. In 1999, union activists launched the campaign with two rallies at City Hall. "You have all these people on the same wavelength turning out for the same things," says Tanya Mahoney, an organizer with United Food and Commercial Workers Local 880. "You have a momentum going, and a power that individually you don't have."

## FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

### Building on the Union Cities Momentum



JIM LEVITT

**M**achinists President Thomas Buffenbarger, chairman of the AFL-CIO Committee on State and Local Central Bodies, sees unions joining their strength for working families' future.

"Often, motion is mistaken for movement. That's not true with Union Cities.

"We see real progress for working families in Union Cities where employers treat workers fairly and where politicians listen to their concerns. There, central labor councils have actively reached out to affiliates and allies. And there, working families are better off because of their actions. Look around. There is real movement here.

"In Cleveland, unions and their allies came together to pass a school finance measure for the children of working families. In several breakthrough states, state federations and central labor councils are revamping themselves as part of the AFL-CIO New Alliance initiative. Together, Union Cities and the New Alliance are attracting more locals to affiliate with their city and state union confederations.

"Increased affiliating increases our solidarity. Forging links with religious congregations, community groups, civil rights organizations and other allies then becomes a natural outgrowth of affiliation. Let's take our cause to the whole community, educate others about our challenges and enlist them in our fights." □

When council members dallied over putting the measure into language and holding hearings, the coalition mounted a huge lobbying action. Activists at street fairs and other events came armed with oversized pro-living wage postcards they persuaded voters to sign, one person to a card. The coalition then gradually mailed them to council members, so that each day's mail seemed to bring more cards. "We know it was effective because a friend of ours, a council aide, called and said, 'Enough already,'" Gallo recalls.

"City council members are not used to getting pressure from constituents in large numbers," Gallo says. "We made a very strong impression and filled up council chambers on the date of the vote."

From the living wage victory, the Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor moved to new power and respect by winning the school levy campaign. Yet activists know their continued mobilization success depends on giving time to attend rallies, make calls and pound the pavement.

"You can't say you can't be bothered," says Mahoney, who volunteers at least once a month. "If you believe in unions, you have to believe 24 hours a day, seven days a week, because people always need help." □



# Welcome to Our Union City

Where Working Families Live and Work Better



Central labor councils that are fulfilling the seven strategies for becoming a Union City and have become a powerful winning force fighting for working people in their communities:

## Atlanta

Even in the face of low union membership, community partnerships and union solidarity have created a strong backbone for the **Atlanta Labor Council, AFL-CIO**, which counts more than 45 affiliates and 45,000 members. One of the council's committees, Jobs with Justice, a coalition of community and religious groups, has been instrumental in the fight by Teamsters Local 728 to end the two-year-old strike at Overnite Transportation by frequently enlisting union members, legislators and political candidates to walk the picket line.

## Cincinnati

The **Cincinnati AFL-CIO Labor Council** has established a member-to-member network based in each of the city's political wards to educate and mobilize members, including for the 2001 mayoral elections. And in the aftermath of civil unrest this past spring, the labor council joined with the local Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice to push for a living wage and a citywide economic justice and development program.

## Cleveland

As the driving force behind this year's successful campaign for a new bond issue to repair public schools, the **Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor** built on its union-community alliances by reaching out to representatives of government and business and engaged in grassroots political action by utilizing a multiunion, member-to-member strategy that included delivering issue leaflets at worksites. The 100,000-member council maximizes its political power and keeps the heat on issues and organizing through an ongoing partnership with Jobs with Justice, a coalition of community and faith-based groups.

## Houston

Amid a booming population of immigrant workers, the **Harris County Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO**, built the clout to take on employers who thought they could cheat a vulnerable workforce. Houston union leaders reached out to allies in the immigrant rights community and put together a coalition that won an indoor day laborer center and received attention from local, national and even international government agencies regarding the plight of immigrant workers. Many of these workers now are seeking a voice on the job with area unions.

## Los Angeles

The **Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO**, used its unique role as the convener of the sprawling area's diverse unions to craft a single message: L.A.'s economy must work for working families. With a massive, 8,000-strong rally, activists kicked off a multiunion bargaining campaign in 2000. The result: wins for janitors, bus drivers, actors and county workers and a first-of-its-kind agreement with powerful developers to include workers' freedom to organize and earn living wages at businesses expanding downtown.

## Madison, Wis.

The **South Central Federation of Labor** integrates its education and mobilization by linking organizing, political action and legislative campaigns to ongoing education in labor history, economics and leadership training. The council assists anti-sweatshop activists at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and sponsors a weekly, half-hour worker-oriented news program on the popular community radio station as part of its communications strategy.

## Milwaukee

In 1999, the **Milwaukee County Labor Council, AFL-CIO**, worked with community and religious groups for passage of an ordinance which ensures that social services and specialized transportation services for seniors and the disabled will not be delayed or disrupted by labor disputes. Some 1,200 workers were the first to get a voice at work following the county's new ordinance. The coalition of community, religious and labor activists also supported the workers throughout their organizing campaigns.

## New York City

The **New York City Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO**, coordinates a year-round Labor in the Pulpits program involving 300 clergy members and on Sept. 11 became a round-the-clock service center for working people and their unions. Union activists are helping connect thousands of workers to services—from accessing death benefits to grief counseling to cutting through the red tape of unemployment insurance.

## Quad Cities, Iowa

The **Quad City, Illinois and Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO**, and its affiliates launched a successful television advertising campaign last year, highlighting the quality work union members perform throughout their communities. The labor council followed up with a door-to-door voter registration and get-out-the-vote effort that resulted in a 79 percent union voter turnout in 2000 and the election of several union members to office.

## San Diego

The **San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council, AFL-CIO**, mobilized its members to elect five pro-working family members to the nine-member San Diego City Council and replace an anti-worker member of Congress in 2000. The council connected its political activism with community outreach and launched a successful community and religious campaign to lobby local officials to pass a living wage law covering transit workers. Political

strength bolstered organizing when the council mobilized activists to successfully push for neutrality and card-check agreements for downtown construction projects.

## San Jose, Calif.

With an eye on the future of the region's and the nation's economy, the **Labor Council of South Bay, AFL-CIO**, created a nonprofit organization to help workers make the transition to a high-tech world. By launching Working Partnerships USA, the council has helped unions develop training programs for union members in computer graphics, introduce women workers to careers in the building trades and create a membership organization for temporary and contingent workers. By mobilizing politically, union activists have a strong voice in regional issues.

## Seattle

As they educate and mobilize a large activist base, Seattle union leaders are creating a Union City abuzz with organizing victories, groundbreaking local legislation and mass rallies. The **King County Labor Council, AFL-CIO**, brought together union and community allies to support successful organizing efforts by graduate employees at the University of Washington with UAW and among nurses at Northwest Hospital joining SEIU. And by building political strength during election season, union activists have elected worker-friendly candidates.

## Syracuse, N.Y.

By convening local unions and working with interns from the AFL-CIO Union Summer program, the **Greater Syracuse Labor Council, AFL-CIO**, played a key role in supporting UFCW's "shop-in" organizing campaign, building on the solidarity it developed during a winning Teamsters organizing drive. In reaching out to campus activists at Syracuse University, the labor council has helped students win victories in their anti-sweatshop campaign and also is building a coalition in support of graduate-employee organizing.

## Washington, D.C.

The **Metropolitan Washington (D.C.) Council, AFL-CIO**, organized 68 Street Heat actions in 2000, an average of one every five or six days. To reach members and the community, the council sends a weekly fax and e-mail to thousands of key activists and supports organizing efforts by hosting organizing roundtables where local union organizers provide updates on ongoing campaigns and share information about organizing techniques.



## IN THE FAST LANE

*Central labor councils that have come the farthest and the fastest on the road to Union Cities:*

Through mobilization of a strong core activist base, the 85,000-member **Denver Area Labor Federation, AFL-CIO**, joined with the Colorado AFL-CIO and affiliated unions to elect a state senate Democratic majority in 2000—preventing Colorado from becoming a “right to work” state.

The **Greater Kansas City (Mo.) Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO**, has helped nurses at Health Midwest hospitals organize with AFT by mobilizing other union members, community allies and elected officials who turn out for rallies and boost workers’ morale.

The **St. Paul (Minn.) Area Trades and Labor Assembly** turns out activists for actions by utilizing a 40,000-name database, spearheading such multiunion activism as coordinating area-wide support for UFCW Local 789’s fight for a contract at Dakota Premium Foods.

## ON THE ROAD

*Central labor councils that have implemented one or more of the seven strategies for becoming Union Cities:*

The **Allegheny County (Penn.) Labor Council, AFL-CIO**, mobilized to help elect four union members to the 15-member county council and built support among the Pittsburgh City Council to pass a living wage ordinance.

In Tucson, the **Southern Arizona Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO**, has recruited and backed worker-friendly candidates for local elected office through hearings and rallies to build awareness of the struggles workers face when they try to organize.

Although the **Central Arkansas Labor Council, AFL-CIO**, has no paid staff, it has put Little Rock on the road to becoming a Union City with the help of community partnerships, especially religious leaders, who have joined in ongoing living wage and organizing campaigns.

With spirited picketing, the **Atlantic and Cape May (N.J.) Counties Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO**, convinced a local developer to build and operate a union grocery store with good wages and benefits, reversing original plans to open a nonunion store.

The **Metropolitan Baltimore Council of AFL-CIO Unions** played a key role in helping members of UNITE win a fair contract with Up-To-Date Laundry this summer by mobilizing community allies for rallies, urging elected officials to pass a city council resolution in support of the workers and coordinating unions to convince the laundry’s customers to urge the company to treat workers fairly.

The **Big Sky (Mont.) Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO**, in Helena amplifies the strength of members by building alliances with religious and environmental allies, creating a workers’ rights board and mobilizing for rallies in support of organizing campaigns.

Activists in the **Southeastern Connecticut Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO**, mobilized to elect so many worker-friendly candidates to the Groton City Council that union members now make up the majority of the body.

The **Central Labor Council of Contra Costa County (Calif.) AFL-CIO** built a broad coalition to support living wage legislation, responsible land-use planning and economic development and other measures aimed at strengthening the economic power of working people.

The **Dayton, Springfield, Sidney, Miami Valley (Ohio) AFL-CIO Regional Labor Council** mobilized to get out the vote in the November mayor’s race and is reaching out to people of color through the A. Philip Randolph Institute, an AFL-CIO constituency group.

The **Duluth (Minn.) AFL-CIO Central Body** mobilized members for political action, electing six pro-worker members to the City Council in 1998 and 2000 and six to the school board.

The **South Florida AFL-CIO**, located in Miami Beach, has fought the roadblocks on the way to becoming a Union City with this year’s successful living wage campaign that mobilized a coalition of community partners to lobby city council members.

The **Greater Hartford (Conn.) Labor Council, AFL-CIO**, coordinated the first statewide student-labor summit Sept. 22 to discuss strengthening its coalition and explore strategies for working together on issues of mutual concern.

The **Kent-Ionia (Mich.) Labor Council, AFL-CIO**, mobilized union voters to elect five union members to public office in 2000.

The **Knoxville-Oak Ridge Area CLC, AFL-CIO**, is making Knoxville a Union City by partnering with religious groups that regularly turn out members for events, including the annual Labor Day breakfast.

Through its political strength, the **Central Massachusetts AFL-CIO** created strong support for the ultimate victory of 840 workers at St. Gobain/Norton Company who sought a voice at work with UAW, and for the successful organizing efforts of 8,000 more area workers.

After merging the Santa Cruz County and Monterey County labor councils, the new **Monterey Bay Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO**, is building on its successes in passing a living wage law in Santa Cruz and aiding organizing efforts among “temp” city workers and hotel workers at a newly built conference center.

The **Nashville and Middle Tennessee AFL-CIO Central Labor Council** has transformed Nashville into a Union City: Last year, thanks to a strong political program, 14 union members ran for the 35-member city council, and 10 won.

A week of actions by the **Central New Mexico Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO**, and community partners to support organizing and first contracts for AFSCME, Machinists, Painters and Allied Trades and Postal Workers was instrumental in IAM’s contract victory at Lockheed Martin.

The **North Shore (Mass.) Labor Council, AFL-CIO**, educated union activists and allies on the unjust global economy and mobilized a delegation of 35 union members this past spring to travel to Quebec to demonstrate against the anti-worker Free Trade Area of the Americas Agreement.

The **Central Oklahoma AFL-CIO Labor Council** organized a multi-union rapid-response team that played a key role in mobilizing union voters in the 2001 “right to work” referendum, including helping to register 92 percent of union members to vote.

In Southwest Massachusetts, the **Pioneer Valley Labor Council’s** organizing efforts led to victories for workers at Wingate Nursing Home and Allen Ritchey Company.

The **Rochester (N.Y.) and Vicinity Labor Council, AFL-CIO**, built a coalition of people of faith, civil rights groups and women’s organizations that led to a

successful community-wide living wage campaign and ultimate passage of a living wage ordinance by the Rochester City Council.

Starting on the road to Union City, the **San Antonio AFL-CIO Council** coordinated a political campaign that elected a worker-friendly city council and mayor in 2001.

The **San Francisco and San Mateo County central labor councils** formed an innovative partnership to launch a multi-jurisdictional, multi-union organizing and legislative campaign at San Francisco International Airport, resulting in a voice on the job for more than 2,000 workers.

The **Toledo (Ohio) Area AFL-CIO Council** supported a successful organizing drive by UAW at St. Vincent’s Hospital by helping local union affiliates determine which union members had spouses or partners working at the hospital and contacting the members to urge them to ask their spouses or partners to back the union.

The **Westchester/Putnam Counties AFL-CIO Central Labor Body** effectively mobilized thousands of union members to support Lawrence Hospital workers seeking to join SEIU and boost other area union organizing efforts and supported teachers during contract talks.

The **Wichita/Hutchinson Labor Federation of Central Kansas, AFL-CIO**, has improved diversity on labor council committees by recruiting women, members of constituency groups and community groups. ☺





# SPOTLIGHT ON San Diego

BY JAMES B. PARKS

**G**rassroots political education and mobilization is a year-round activity for the unions of the San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council. Members are well versed about issues and candidates at election time—and ready to start knocking on doors and dialing phones. That strategy paid off in 2000 when San Diego's union voters replaced an anti-union congressman with a champion of working families.

"We believe that what you do between elections is the most important work you do to win," says Jerry Butkiewicz. "It means educating and building the base during that time so that by the election, they are ready to engage."

The labor council built its election success beginning with a mobilization in 1996 to save a state statute that requires overtime pay for more than eight hours of work in one day. Hundreds of workers crowded a state Industrial Welfare Commission hearing in San Diego to speak out. Other labor councils organized similar efforts across the state. Building on their success, the councils, including San Diego's, mobilized working families in 1999 to elect a new governor who restored overtime pay.

Energized by these wins, the 100,000 union members in San Diego continue to mobilize. And in 2000 they elected five pro-working family members to the nine-member San Diego City Council.

## Coalition-building for a living wage

Connecting political activism with community outreach, the labor council last year launched a local Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, made up of leaders of faith-based organizations, to help lobby local officials to pass an \$8.35-an-hour living wage law covering transit workers.

The interfaith committee now is part of the labor council's nonprofit local economic research institute, the Center on Policy Initiatives, which conducted a budget analysis on the cost of the wage increases to the city.

Launched in 1997, the center

REGISTRAR  
OF VOTERS



SAN DIEGO-IMPERIAL COUNTIES LABOR COUNCIL

researches the local economy, promotes policy initiatives and helps support organizing campaigns. Along with another CPI project, Students for Economic Justice, the union movement reached out to other community partners to form a coalition to support the living wage proposals, which the transit board passed unanimously in February 2000.

"It can be done—even in San Diego," a city with a tradition of conservative, anti-union politics, Butkiewicz says.

**Coalition-building:** By working with leaders of faith-based organizations, the labor council successfully lobbied lawmakers to pass an \$8.35-an-hour living wage law covering transit workers.





## Bridging politics and organizing

Building political strength also bolsters organizing: When the city sought bids for downtown redevelopment projects, including a new stadium for the Padres major league baseball team, the council mobilized activists to push successfully for neutrality and card-check agreements for the projects.

Such a mobilization would have been much harder to organize before the council started its Union Cities effort, says Sandra Mullins-Harman, who coordinates the council's organizing network. "When we began Union Cities, we reconstituted the organizing committee, urged union members to attend labor studies classes established by the labor council at the local community colleges and began to talk about how we could reach out to the community and to our own members." One outcome is a new sense of empowerment: "Every time we had a victory, we were energized to move on and win another battle."

That new energy also is behind the council's growth from fewer than 75 affiliated unions five years ago to 120 today. Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 315 is among the unions that have affiliated with the labor council in the past two years. "There has been such a turnaround in the union movement here since we began Union Cities," says BCTGM Local 315 Secretary-Treasurer Deborah Lacey-Zuelsdorf. "My members are much more aware of what's going on, and they are much more active."

The council maintains a toll-free organizing hotline for nonunion workers seeking a voice at work, passing the information and contacts along to the appropriate union. The council advertises the hotline throughout the area via bumper stickers, T-shirts and ads in community dinner programs. "Rather than buy the usual congratulatory ad, we put in an organizing ad," says Mullins-Harman. "We also purchase radio ads promoting our toll-free number."



Action plan: Street Heat action is a key part of the San Diego labor council's mobilization strategies.

## Strength Through Diversity

As chairwoman of the AFL-CIO Executive Council's Committee on Women Workers, Coalition of Labor Union Women President Gloria Johnson discusses how diversity strengthens the union movement.

How has diversity strengthened the San Diego union community, the Los Angeles union community and others that are demonstrating what it takes to be Union Cities?



"Reaching out to women and people of color makes the Union Cities leadership more representative of the membership of the workforce and changes the face the movement presents to workers. By building diversity, you bring talent into the union movement that ordinarily would not have been recognized or used. And when members see another person like them in the leadership of the movement, they identify with and want to support that person. So it builds union strength."

"Women and people of color also bring a new perspective on union issues, and they have relationships with communities that make it easier to deliver the message about unions to new groups of workers."

What are the next steps in building a diverse union movement?

"We need to continue to support efforts to increase the number of women and people of color in leadership throughout the entire union movement. Women and minorities are the fastest growing segments of the workforce, and we must reach out to them if the union movement is to survive." @

## Success with Street Heat

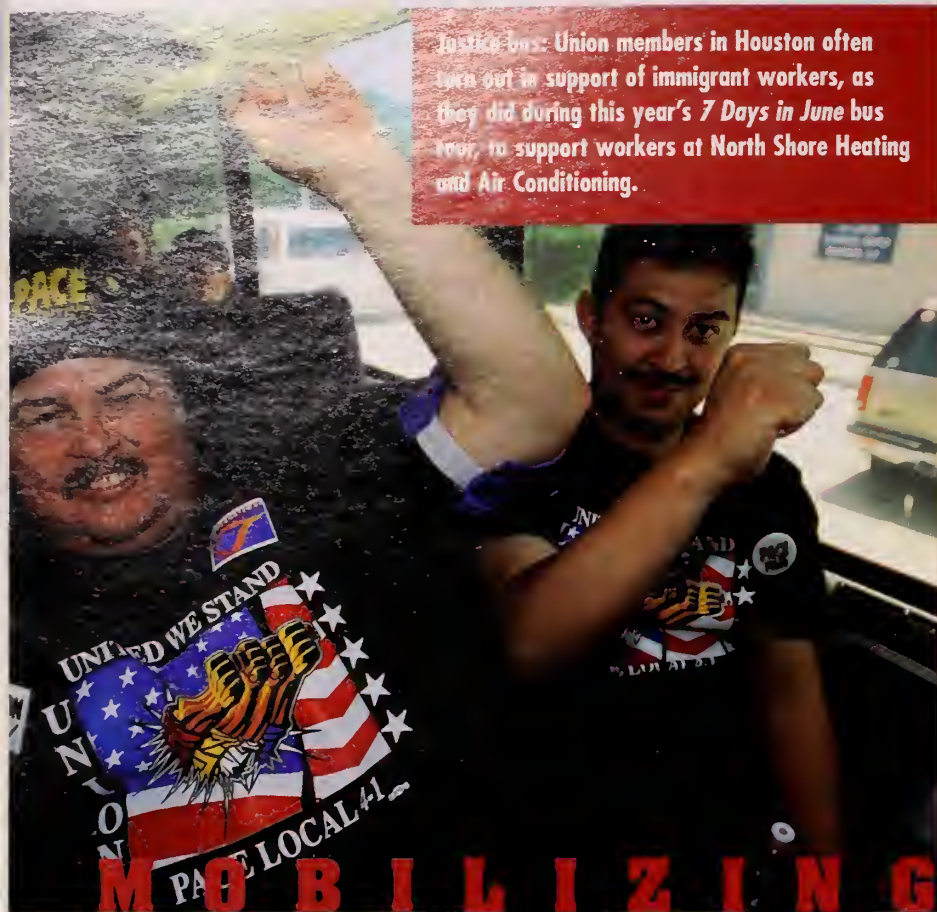
Last year, the San Diego labor council organized 13 Street Heat events, one of which drew 800 participants. Some of those actions were in support of United Domestic Workers of America, which is affiliated with AFSCME. When UDW/AFSCME sought the union movement's help in organizing 12,000 home care workers, the council mobilized union members for rallies and successfully lobbied elected officials to pass a law making the county the employer of the home care workers. The effort paid off in October when the home care workers voted to join UDW/AFSCME (see page 5).

The council also is playing a big role in helping to mobilize union and community support for Local 315's organizing drive at Delimex, a local food manufacturer with 500 employees. "Unions working together is directly related to Union Cities," says Lacey-Zuelsdorf. "We realize that by working together and helping each other we can make this a Union City." @



Houston

**Justice bus:** Union members in Houston often took out in support of immigrant workers, as they did during this year's 7 Days in June bus tour, to support workers at North Shore Heating and Air Conditioning.



# for Community Outreach

BY LAUREEN LAZAROVICI

*"It has been a very good experience in Houston working with the labor council, which has enabled many organizations to reach out to each other."*

—Benito Juarez, Houston community outreach specialist for the mayor's office of immigrant and refugee affairs



**S**purred on by the seven-point Union Cities blueprint, union leaders have fashioned the Harris County AFL-CIO into a powerhouse organization that wins real and lasting victories for immigrant workers in Houston and beyond.

The labor council was instrumental in setting up one of the nation's first indoor day labor sites, named for martyred Salvadoran human rights leader Archbishop Oscar Romero. Richard Shaw, labor council secretary-treasurer, links unions' involvement in the project directly to the strategies outlined in the Union Cities blueprint. "Union Cities gives us a program to work around, and one goal of Union Cities is building community coalitions," says Shaw.

Coalition-building led the labor council to connect with immigrants' rights groups, including the local American Friends Service Committee, which partnered with union members on a voter registration task force. The Friends' concern for immigrant workers who are exploited on the job dovetailed with many building trades unions' concern that some unscrupulous contractors on public works projects don't pay the prevailing wage to immigrant workers—who often don't know their rights.

Up from 16 percent in 1990, today some 21 percent of the city's workforce is immigrants—and unprincipled employers often take advantage of them. "Houston's exploitation of low-wage immigrant labor becomes a downward-spiraling race to the bottom, with few economic wage gains made by those who provide Houston's most basic labor needs—but do not share in Houston's economic gains," says Shaw.

Shaw and Friends leader Maria Jimenez began visiting sites where day laborers gathered, talking with them about their concerns. As a result, building and construction trades unions adopted new strate-

gies—including passing resolutions in support of immigrant workers' rights—to reach out to immigrant workers. In summer 1999, activists organized the first annual "Justice Bus" tour as part of the AFL-CIO's 7 Days in June initiative—a national, weeklong series of events to spotlight workers organizing for a voice on the job and the obstacles they face when they do. One stop on that tour: construction sites in Houston where contractors were cheating immigrant workers out of the prevailing wage.

As the labor council shined a spotlight on these issues, the federal Equal Employment Opportunities Commission held a June 1999 hearing on the exploitation of low-wage workers in Houston.

JAY HAMBURGER



There, the labor council presented its report, *Houston's Dirty Little Secret*, based on the council's investigation of employer abuse of Latino construction workers. The hearing and report galvanized the EEOC to create a task force on low-wage workers that included the city, the U.S. Labor Department, the U.S. Justice Department and local immigrant rights organizations.

Building on the momentum, the labor council worked with advocacy groups and the local government to launch the day labor site, a just and humane alternative to the informal system in which workers approach a line of cars whose drivers often hire them for short-term, unsafe jobs at substandard wages. The site, which opened in June 2001, is run like a union hiring hall, respecting seniority, wage scales and payment enforcement. There, union activists also conduct trainings on workers' rights, and the workers themselves elect leaders to run it.

"The labor council saw the need, went to the job sites and got the political leaders involved," says Doug McGee, business manager and organizer for Sheet Metal Workers Local 54. "It snowballed, with the labor council leading the way."

### Organizing, political action, community outreach

Union leaders say the importance of connecting community outreach and political action is highlighted in efforts to assist 85 Latino employees of Quiet Flex to gain a voice at work. Frustrated by low pay, poor benefits and unhealthy conditions, workers for the company, a nonunion flexible duct manufacturer, walked off their jobs in January 2000. The labor council and SMWIA Local 54 coordinated community support—including letters from more than 20 elected officials backing the workers—while the EEOC filed discrimination charges. Today, the workers are back on the job and the agency is negotiating back pay. The community backing the labor council generated "helped give us the emotional support to move on," says Lazaro Garcia, a Quiet Flex worker. "We hope the legal system will be on our side and help change Quiet Flex for every worker."

### Building trust among workers

Says Benito Juarez, community outreach specialist for the mayor's office of immigrant and refugee affairs: "It has been a very good experience in Houston working with the labor council, which has enabled many organizations to reach out to each other."

By building strong public support of immigrant workers' rights, the labor council is winning enduring social change. One example: The labor council negotiated a labor peace/neutrality agreement for the convention center and hotel Houston is building with public funds. The agreement will ensure justice for the workers who build the facilities—and for those who work in them after they open.

As immigrant workers increasingly assert their most basic rights with the labor council's help, they are more and more willing to take the next step and form unions. In June 2001, Houston's now-traditional Justice Bus stopped at North Shore Heating and Air Conditioning, which had been cheating workers out of proper pay. Today, it's a union shop with SMWIA Local 54. "We are trying to create a climate for organizing immigrant workers," says Shaw. ☐

## FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

# Building Tolerance

Immigrant rights and full workplace protection for all workers



PAUL BARRY/HERE

As chairman of the AFL-CIO Executive Council's Committee on Immigration Policy, Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees President John Wilhelm discusses the union movement's fight for immigrant workers' rights in the aftermath of Sept. 11.

How have the events of Sept. 11 changed the climate for the movement for immigrant workers' rights, and why is it important for unions to continue fighting for immigration reform?

"We lost 43 members of the HERE family at the Windows on the World Restaurant on the top floor of the World Trade Center. In addition, the terrorist attacks resulted in mass, and hopefully temporary, layoffs along with reduced hours for our members throughout the country. Thousands of our members come from all over the world. They were the face of working America. Today, they are the face of the unemployed.

"Sadly, as we work to assist our members and their families, we are faced with a backlash against immigrants. Workers are denied many forms of emergency aid because of their immigration status. The Sept. 11 attacks underscore why it is so critical for our unions to continue the fight on behalf of immigrant workers."

What lessons have we learned from the union movement's immigrant rights forums and the efforts over the past two years for immigrant workers' rights?

"When more immigrant workers have a voice and the public learns about their struggle and contributions, the public will support immigrant workers. Immigrant workers are discovering that unions welcome them, and unions are discovering immigrant members today are what they were a century ago—a powerful voice for all workers."

What must unions and activists do now to improve conditions for immigrant workers?

"First, we must put people back to work. We must ensure that every taxpaying worker has access to emergency aid irrespective of immigration status.

"Second, we must guard against any backlash against immigrants and not repeat the mistakes of World War II when immigrants were interned. Many of the victims and the heroes of Sept. 11 are immigrants. We must not allow anyone to link these hard-working immigrants with terrorists.

"Finally, we must continue our partnership with the immigrant communities as they and their families increase their involvement in the political process through civic participation. That participation will remind political leaders that America is a nation of immigrants—red, white and blue." ☐



★ Washington, D.C.

# MOBILIZING for Street Heat

BY JAMES B. PARKS

**W**hen an affiliate union of the Metropolitan Washington (D.C.) Council asks for assistance in an organizing campaign or contract negotiation, the local council helps the union map a campaign plan.

"We sit down and assess the situation, the nature of the conflict and the employer's vulnerabilities," says Chris Garlock, the council's Union Cities coordinator. "Often, people want to have a rally or a picket line, but there are a lot more tools at their disposal—a letter writing campaign, media campaign, political pressure, whatever works best."

Often the strategy includes *Street Heat*, the mass mobilization of union members and their allies in contract or organizing campaigns and a key tactic in building a Union City. The Metropolitan Washington Council, which includes the District of Columbia and five counties in suburban Maryland, organized 68 *Street Heat* actions in 2000, an average of one every five or six days, up from 29 in 1999. Council leaders, whose outreach techniques include a weekly fax and e-mail to thousands of key activists, expect an even higher figure this year.

"When employers see how quickly and effectively the entire union movement comes together, it makes a difference," says council President Joslyn Williams.



**Street Heat:** AFGE President Bobby Harnage joins the Washington, D.C., labor council in a *Street Heat* action to help HERE Local 27 parking lot attendants win a voice on the job.

Several *Street Heat* actions over the past two years supported HERE Local 27 parking lot attendants in their attempt to win a voice on the job. One event coincided with the worldwide protests organized in September 2000 by the international union movement against the anti-worker lending policies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The council mobilized more than 100 activists in support of the parking lot workers, many of whom are African immigrants, linking their struggle to the poverty-level wages and unjust working conditions fostered by corporate control of the global economy.

"It really moves me to know we're not in this alone," says Louis Williams, who is involved in a HERE Local 27 organizing drive at InterPark, where he works. "I can see that there are a lot of people who come together to work for a common goal of justice. When the employees realized how much support we have, it helped us stand up to the company."

Meanwhile, members of The Newspaper Guild/Communications Workers of America Local 32035 received support in their efforts for a fair contract last year at the Bureau of National Affairs, a legal publishing company. The council organized a rally that drew more than 200 people and solicited local lawmakers to write letters of support.

In addition to *Street Heat* actions, the council supports organizing efforts by hosting organizing roundtables in which local union organizers provide updates on ongoing campaigns and share information about organizing techniques. The council also encourages organizing by giving organizing awards each year to local unions.





## Bolstering organizing with political action

Unions cannot organize in a vacuum, Williams says, so the council emphasizes political action and community outreach. "Politicians make decisions on policies that affect whether we can organize," he says. "To influence the politicians, we must have enough votes at the ballot box. To be successful, we not only have to educate our members on the issues, but build coalitions with similar groups."

The council recently mobilized its members and many community groups to successfully lobby the city council for a package of bills to provide relief for Washington, D.C.-area workers who lost jobs after the Sept. 11 terrorist attack on the Pentagon. The council also has created coalitions with faith-based groups to work for pending living wage proposals in Washington, D.C., and Montgomery County, Md.

One key lesson the council learned is the need to constantly educate union members and allies about area campaigns so activists are well informed and can mobilize quickly, says Fred Barnes, business manager of Iron Workers Local 5 in Upper Marlboro, Md. "Since the Union Cities program started, the D.C. council has been paramount in getting information out to affiliates. It has made my members more aware that there are other union members out there who are in the same boat as we are and who need help."

## Building community support

One of the council's most successful forms of communication with members, elected officials and the media is the "Union City!" newsletter, which goes out to more than 5,000 activists via e-mail and 1,000 more by fax every week. The newsletter, which includes short news items and calls to action, began last year with about 1,000 e-mail and 100 fax subscribers. Union leaders ask activists at rallies to sign cards that include space for e-mail addresses.

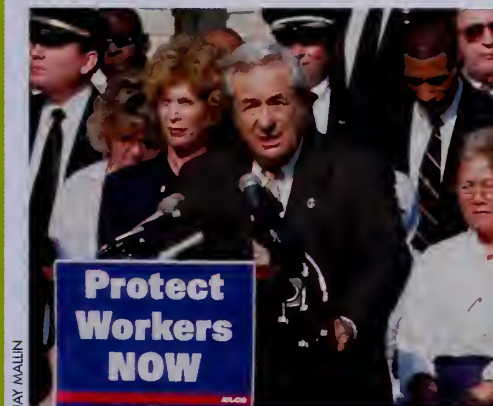
While the council reaches out to community groups through the newsletter and in regular meetings with allies on common issues, the strongest part of the council's community outreach effort, Williams says, is its Community Services Agency, which provides emergency help to union members. In the aftermath of Sept. 11, when nearby National Airport was closed temporarily and the area's hospitality industry was devastated, the agency collected nearly \$100,000 in donations to help more than 500 workers pay utility bills, buy groceries or get medication.

"That's what being a Union City is all about—helping your brothers and sisters in whatever way

## FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

# Fighting for Global Fairness

*As chairman of the AFL-CIO Executive Council's Committee on International Affairs, Communications Workers of America President Morton Bahr discusses the union movement's fight for global economic justice in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 tragedy.*



**Sept. 11 changed the environment for the global justice movement. What are the next steps for the global justice movement?**

"If anything, our work on behalf of global justice is more important than ever. Our labor movement is one of the most powerful forces for advancing global democracy and human

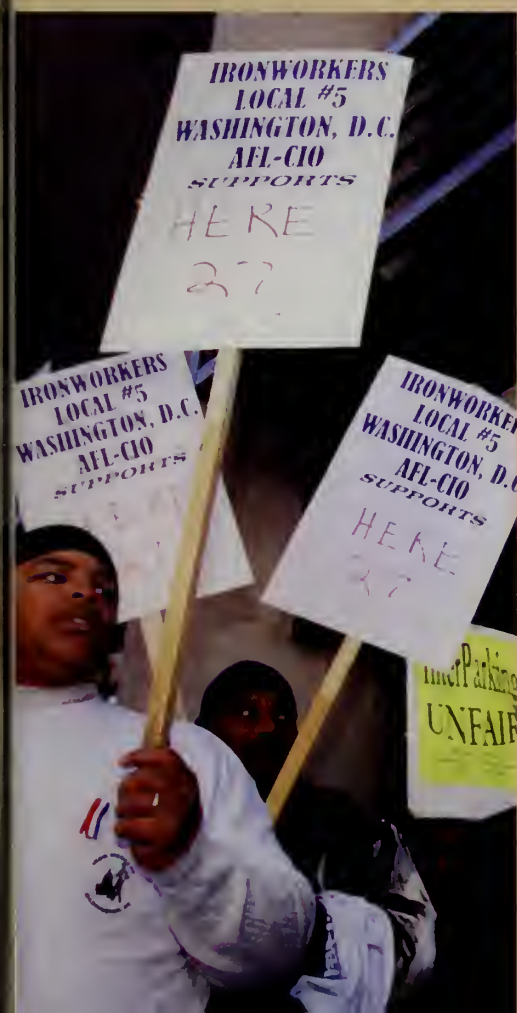
rights. We must eliminate not just those responsible for the attack, but also the climate of misery, injustice and resentment that is a breeding ground for terror."

**The union movement has joined with new allies to protest the policies of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization. How has this outreach strengthened the union movement, and how can we build on it?**

"We have to continue to develop and expand our global bonds with unions and progressive groups and find creative ways to assist each other in organizing and bargaining struggles and in shaping trade policies that work for working people, not just corporate investors. We must continue to develop, along with our international partners, innovative ways to pressure global trade and financial institutions to take workers' rights and well-being into account as they lay down the rules of economic globalization."

**Many union members in this country have rallied in support of workers seeking a voice at work abroad. How do these actions make the global justice movement more meaningful to union members?**

"The success of our efforts for global economic justice begins at the central labor council and local union level with the education and mobilization of individual workers. Programs such as the AFL-CIO's 'Common Sense Economics' curriculum and *Street Heat* protests against IMF policies and Fast Track help us realize our struggles here are linked with struggles in other countries—linked not only by common issues and concerns, but often by common employers." □



they need help," says Williams. "If they need money for food, help with an organizing campaign or just advice on how to do something, the labor council is the place where they ought to be able to go." □



★ Los Angeles

# MOBILIZING for Stronger Bargaining



**A**t the start of 2000, when contracts covering some 300,000 union members—including janitors, actors and public employees—in Los Angeles were up for renewal, the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor was prepared to provide the support unions needed, coordinating and bolstering their efforts to ensure fair pacts for the area's working families.

For more than two years, the L.A. labor council had built its capacity as a Union City. It compiled an up-to-date database of activists, transitioned from "checkbox" politics focused on campaign contributions for candidates to issues education and member mobilization and brought affiliate unions together to craft a common economic agenda. By the time the labor council began developing the campaign for fair contracts, the necessary groundwork was in place: Affiliates maintained solid ties with each other, clergy members were integrated into the struggle for working families' issues and elected officials understood the power of strong union phone-banking and precinct-walking operations.

## Successful bargaining built on multiunion strength

From this strong Union City foundation, labor council leaders mobilized more than 8,000 activists in March 2000 from a wide range of unions and community allies. Backed by this show of unity, and with labor council research demonstrating Los Angeles working families were not sharing in the city's prosperity, unions launched contract talks from strong bargaining positions.

The symbolic kickoff energized workers and allies for the difficult but ultimately victorious strikes that followed. Insulted by an inadequate pay proposal, 8,500 janitors, members of SEIU Local 1877, went out on a three-week strike that drew nationwide attention and passionate public support. Their rallies and marches attracted other union members, including actors and Teamsters, and elected officials. In the end, the janitors bargained for a healthy pay raise and a commitment that cleaning companies would stay neutral during organizing campaigns in neighboring Orange County—a bargaining strategy that led to a voice at work for 3,000 janitors there in January 2001.

Other high-profile strikes last year that ended with improvements for workers include the strike by Television and Radio Artists and Screen Actors against the broadcast commercial industry and a walkout by Los Angeles County public employees, members of SEIU Local 660. "We convened all the unions in fall 1999 and developed a common message that L.A.'s economy has to

work for all working families," says Miguel Contreras, secretary-treasurer of the labor council. "Union leaders pledged to each other that when one contract was settled, it didn't mean the fight was over. People made a commitment to each other."

## Connecting organizing and political action

Following months of bargaining victories, union leaders saw the importance of electing pro-worker lawmakers more clearly than ever—and L.A. unionists headed into the 2000 political cycle with gusto. The labor council mobilized locals to get out more than 2,000 volunteers for phone banking and precinct walking and encouraged locals to "adopt a day" for get-out-the-vote activities. Focusing on three key congressional races, the activists provided the margin of victory for two candidates to oust incumbents. Early in 2001, the labor council built an unprecedented coalition that nearly elected L.A.'s first Latino mayor.

The labor council uses its political strength to maintain and build relationships with local elected officials, who are increasingly heeding union activists' calls to use their influence to improve the lives of working families. This spring, when millionaire developers sought to build thousands of square feet of offices, hotels, housing, a theater and shops around the newly built Staples Center downtown, the labor council and key unions mobilized a coalition to ensure working families' needs were met. Workers negotiated directly with the developers and won provisions ensuring the plans would include affordable housing, parks—and jobs that pay a living wage (\$7.72 an hour with benefits or \$8.97 without) or are covered by a union contract. Assured the community would support the project with these benefits, the Los Angeles City Council approved the plan this summer.

"The county federation played a key role, especially in fostering a strong sense of solidarity," says David Koff, senior research analyst of Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees, one of five unions that came together to win clear, written commitments from the developer on workers' right to organize. Labor council leaders "were sort of 'the eye in the sky,'" ensuring the developers knew the entire union movement was watching the negotiations, says Koff. The labor council had several years earlier negotiated to ensure the original Staples Center arena was built union and that service workers would have a voice on the job. "So we went one step further and told the developers that we wanted them to deal with our coalition partners" to get affordable housing, green space, transportation and job training for residents, says Contreras. "It was a real milestone." @

—Laureen Lazarovici





Multiunion support: St. Paul and Minneapolis union activists joined forces to bolster efforts by HERE Local 17 to ensure workers' jobs at the Holiday Inn RiverCentre Hotel.

**HOTEL EMPLOYEES &  
RESTAURANT EMPLOYEES  
LOCAL #17, AFL-CIO**  
Dignity • Respect

# SPOTLIGHT ON St. Paul, Minn.

BY JANE BIRNBAUM

In 1999, after St. Paul, Minn., Mayor Norm Coleman proposed an initiative to privatize city services, more than 20 unions representing members employed by the city joined with community groups to respond to the attack on working families. Together with the Twin City Area Religion Labor Network and Progressive Minnesota, union members formed the St. Paul Works Alliance—and forged relationships so strong that activists point to St. Paul Works as the first step in the union movement's efforts to become a Union City, recalls Robin Madsen, president of AFSCME Local 1842.

When St. Paul Works turned out 1,200 activists to protest at the mayor's office and persuaded the city council to restrict his privatization effort, Compete St. Paul, "rank-and-file members realized that what affects one affiliate could affect others," Madsen says. "There was a much higher awareness of multiunion activity after Compete St. Paul—and we're much more effective when we're together."

In recent years, St. Paul's central labor council, called the St. Paul Area Trades and Labor Assembly, has built on the success of St. Paul Works by creating a communication infrastructure that reaches out to more than 100 affiliated unions and 39,000-plus members.

## Member communication

Bernie Hesse, a United Food and Commercial Workers Local 789 special projects coordinator, always is ready to mobilize members through multiunion action and *Street Heat*—the mass mobilization of union members and their allies to support workers seeking a voice at work or a fair contract. When the assembly faxed him

information about a rally supporting Minnesota's 28,000 striking state employees in October, a month after the Sept. 11 terrorist attack, Hesse was prepared to turn out members rapidly.

Hesse immediately called the local's most active members, almost all of whom showed up to support workers in their ultimately successful strike. "I think a number of our members were angry that the media are portraying the striking workers as unpatriotic," Hesse says. "They see this could happen to them down the road, setting up that kind of climate when it's their turn to bargain." (See box, p. 30.)

A key to St. Paul's year-round multiunion mobilization, says Shar Knutson, assembly president and AFSCME Local 1842 member, is its database. The 40,000 names—mostly union members, plus activists from community and faith-based groups—can be sorted by union and by political precincts and wards. Knutson can count on more than 10 activists who will stop by on a day's notice to call members to action and explain its importance.

When contacted, members are likelier to turn out if they already are somewhat familiar with the issues, which they learn about from reading the *Union Advocate*, the assembly's newspaper, mailed twice a month to all members.

"The *Advocate* makes a big difference," Madsen says. "It keeps everyone on top of what's happening everywhere."

The assembly's communication outreach has ensured St. Paul unionists are aware of HERE Local 17's yearlong fight to make the Holiday Inn RiverCentre Hotel honor the agreement that covered



workers, many of them immigrants, before the hotel closed for renovations. In August, that multiunion support was demonstrated by nearly 500 representatives of a host of unions—including the building trades, Communications Workers of America and UFCW—who marched from the state AFL-CIO convention to the hotel.

Similarly, approximately 100 activists, including UAW and Machinists members, turned out alongside UFCW Local 789 members who work as meat packers at Dakota Premium Foods during this year's *7 Days in June*—the union movement's weeklong series of nationwide actions demonstrating the obstacles workers face in winning a voice on the job. The action threw a spotlight on the workers' fight for a contract with the company.

### Mobilizing members

But even when members know the issues, they often still must be persuaded to mobilize. With family and work commitments, people get tired, Hesse says, and it helps to let them know "there's a chance of success."

"A lot of members are afraid to be active," he says, but once they've taken part in an action, it's easier to get them more involved. Hesse cites his efforts with a long-term "You Are Worth More" campaign aimed at low-wage workers for mega-retailers such as Wal-Mart that are moving aggressively into the grocery business, threatening to depress existing union agreements. Members from a variety of unions—including AFSCME, Laborers and AFT-affiliated Education Minnesota—have dropped literature or worn special informational T-shirts while inside the stores. "Once they've done something like that, it's not hard to get them out for a rally or to write an official," Hesse says.

Educating activists, contacting them rapidly, building relationships so they keep turning out: all are at the heart of St. Paul's success as a Union City, says Knutson. "When you build a labor movement that turns out crowds for events, everyone listens to you." ☐

*"When you build a labor movement that turns out crowds for events, everyone listens to you."*

—AFSCME Local 1842 member  
Shar Knutson (right),  
St. Paul labor council president



All-American: Minnesota state employees ended their strike in victory in October.



AP PHOTO/ANN HEISENFELT

## 28,000 State Employees Wage Successful Strike

**S**triking Minnesota state employees, including 18,000 members of AFSCME Council 6 and 10,000 belonging to the non-affiliated Minnesota Association of Professional Employees, returned to work Oct. 15 after 14 days off the job. AFSCME's new two-year agreement calls for a 3.5 percent increase both years retroactive to July 1 and, most important, a health insurance plan that doesn't jeopardize working families.

The state's original proposal asked for out-of-pocket contributions for medication and hospital stays that could have amounted to \$3,800 a year for a family. AFSCME's new agreement reduces that \$3,800 by about half.

AFSCME members, who rejected a contract proposal in August, originally were scheduled to go out Sept. 17. But although they postponed the walkout in the wake of Sept. 11, they found their patriotism questioned—including by Gov. Jesse Ventura, who made a big show crossing the picket line.

Workers were undeterred by the Independent Party governor who earlier this year spent state surplus money on tax cuts for the wealthy. AFSCME President Gerald McEntee and Secretary-Treasurer William Lucy spoke to 3,000 state workers who rallied in the rain at the state capitol in St. Paul.

AFSCME members from New York City, including Israel Miranda, a New York City Fire Department paramedic and Local 250 member, also expressed their support at the rally. "You have a right to better wages and better benefits," said Miranda. "We all stand behind you." ☐



DIANE O'BRIEN



Make holiday gift giving fun, easy and union-filled with the books, websites and catalog listed below. When ordering books online, remember that Powells Books ([www.powells.com](http://www.powells.com)) in Portland, Ore., where workers are members of Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 5, is the largest union bookstore in the nation.

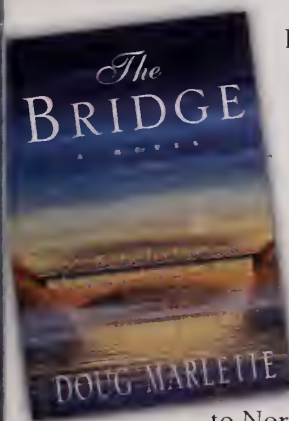
## CATALOG

The Labor Heritage Foundation's new "Catalog of Music, Art, Books & Video" offers one-stop union shopping and includes cards, posters and buttons. Labor Heritage Foundation, 888 16th St. N.W., Suite 680, Washington, D.C. 20006, [www.laborheritage.org](http://www.laborheritage.org). While visiting the website, click on "Songs of Holiday Solidarity" and hear new lyrics to your favorite Yuletide tunes. @



## PUBLICATIONS

**Raise the Floor: Wages and Policies That Work for All of Us**, by Holly Sklar, Laryssa Mykyta and Susan Wefald, is a must-buy for living wage and minimum wage activists. The information in the book's 59 tables and charts easily refutes Big Business excuses for not raising the minimum wage or paying a living wage. \$9.95. Ms. Foundation for Women, [www.raisethefloor.org](http://www.raisethefloor.org).

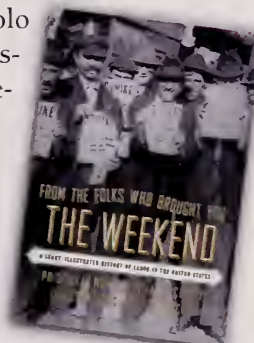


In *The Bridge*, Pulitzer Prize-winning political cartoonist Doug Marlette creates a heart-warming, intergenerational fiction piece based on revelations he discovered about his grandmother. Newspaper cartoonist Pick Cantrell returns home

to North Carolina and, in the process of restoring an historic home, learns about the house's hidden history—and his grandmother's as well. During the bloody 1934 General Textile Strike among 400,000 workers along the East Coast, she had been an outspoken union supporter who was bayoneted by a National Guardsman—an incident family members never discussed. \$26. HarperCollins Publishers.

## From the Folks Who Brought You the Weekend: A Short Illustrated History of Labor in the United States

by Priscilla Murolo and A.B. Chitty, with illustrations by Joe Sacco, presents a working-class perspective of American history from the days of slavery to today's technology revolution. The authors make clear that for workers, no victory is final and no gain is secure. An ample index makes this a good reference book. \$27.50 hardcover. The New Press. @



## FOR THE KIDS

**The Doorman**, written by Edward Grimm and illustrated by Ted Lewin, captures the dedication of a doorman named John who looks out for the tenants in his apartment building. Seen through the eyes of Nellie, a young girl, the story tells of her loss on the day that John is no longer there. For children ages 4–8. \$16.95. Orchard Books.

**The Reuther Brothers: Walter, Roy and Victor**, by Mike and Pam Smith, tells the story of the three unionists instrumental in creating the United Auto Workers. Children age 10 and older. \$24.95 hardcover, \$14.95 paper. Wayne State University Press, <http://wsupress.wayne.edu>.

**A. Philip Randolph: Union Leader and Civil Rights Crusader**, by Catherine Reef, is a biography of one of the most influential African American leaders of the 20th century. By the time he spearheaded the 1963 March on Washington, D.C., for Jobs and Freedom, Randolph—who organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in 1925—already had devoted 40 years to the African American struggle for social and economic justice. Children age 10 and up. \$20.95. Orchard Books, [www.enslow.com](http://www.enslow.com).

**Jessie De La Cruz: Profile of a United Farm Worker**, by Gary Soto, is a moving biography of a Mexican-American farm worker, the first female organizer for the United Farm Workers, who devoted a half-century of work to migrant farm workers. Writer Studs Terkel calls Jessie De La Cruz "a true American heroine." Children age 10 and older.

\$17.95 hardback. Persea Books, [www.perseabooks.com](http://www.perseabooks.com). @

## WEBSIGHTINGS

[www.buyunionnow.com](http://www.buyunionnow.com)—Grab your holiday shopping list and check out all the union-made, American-made items listed on this website. The shopping site features items by product category, with listings from "American Flags" to "Watches and Jewelry."


[www.uniteunion.org](http://www.uniteunion.org)—This site has information on sweatshop-free, union-made clothing.

[www.paaficio.org/toysfor.htm](http://www.paaficio.org/toysfor.htm)—The Pennsylvania AFL-CIO's website features a list of union-made toys, books and art supplies.

[www.bread-and-roses.org](http://www.bread-and-roses.org)—Among the many good reasons to visit the Bread & Roses website: the 2002 *Social Justice Calendar*, featuring 12 artists whose original drawings and paintings are complemented by quotations of unity and hope celebrating working people. Produced by the SEIU Greenhouse Cultural Program and Bread and Roses Cultural Project, the \$12.95 calendar is among a large variety of posters and other artwork available at the site. A downloadable PDF version of the calendar also is available at [www.seiu.org/ads](http://www.seiu.org/ads).

[www.gearthatgives.com](http://www.gearthatgives.com)—This site gives visitors the opportunity to purchase gifts, clothing and memberships that aid charities. This site and several that are linked to it, [www.therainforestsite.com](http://www.therainforestsite.com), [www.thebreastcancersite.com](http://www.thebreastcancersite.com) and [www.thehungersite.com](http://www.thehungersite.com), are operated by CharityUSA, which provides free web-space and other services to nonprofit charities. @





# We're on the Road to Union Cities!

**Alaska:** Fairbanks Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

**Arizona:** Central Arizona Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Coconino and Navajo Counties Central Labor Body, AFL-CIO; Nal-Nishii Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO; Southern Arizona Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

**Arkansas:** Central Arkansas Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

**California:** Contra Costa County AFL-CIO, Central Labor Council of; Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO; Monterey Bay Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Orange County AFL-CIO, Central Labor Council of; Sacramento Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council, AFL-CIO; San Joaquin and Calaveras Counties, Central Labor Council of; San Mateo County Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Labor Council of South Bay AFL-CIO.

**Colorado:** Denver Area Labor Federation, AFL-CIO.

**Connecticut:** Bristol Labor Council, AFL-CIO (Greater); Fairfield County Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Hartford Labor Council, AFL-CIO (Greater); New Haven Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO (Greater); Southeastern Connecticut Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Western Connecticut Central Labor Council.

**District of Columbia:** Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO.

**Florida:** Broward County AFL-CIO; Central Florida AFL-CIO; North Central Florida AFL-CIO, Central Labor Council of; Northwest Florida Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO; Palm Beach-Treasure Coast, AFL-CIO; South Florida AFL-CIO; Southwest Florida Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Space Coast AFL-CIO Labor Council; West Central Florida Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO.

**Georgia:** Albany/Southwest Georgia Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Atlanta Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Augusta Federation of Trades, AFL-CIO; Savannah and Vicinity, AFL-CIO Trades and Labor Assembly.

**Idaho:** Boise Central Trades and Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

**Illinois:** Chicago Federation of Labor and Industrial Union Council, AFL-CIO; Madison County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO (Greater); Quad City, Illinois and Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO; Springfield and Central Illinois Trades and Labor Council, AFL-CIO; West Central Illinois Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

**Indiana:** Central Indiana Labor Council, AFL-CIO; East Central Indiana AFL-CIO Council; White River Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

**Iowa:** Black Hawk Union Council, AFL-

CIO; Hawkeye Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Iowa City Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO; South Central Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO.

**Kansas:** Lawrence Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Topeka Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO; Tri-County Labor Council of Eastern Kansas, AFL-CIO; Wichita/Hutchinson Labor Federation of Central Kansas, AFL-CIO.

**Kentucky:** Louisville Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO (Greater); Northern Kentucky AFL-CIO Labor Council.

**Louisiana:** New Orleans AFL-CIO (Greater); Shreveport and Vicinity Central Trades and Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

**Maine:** Central Maine Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Southern Maine Labor Council.

**Maryland:** Baltimore Council of AFL-CIO Unions, Metropolitan; Central Maryland AFL-CIO Council.

**Massachusetts:** Boston Labor Council, AFL-CIO (Greater); Central Massachusetts AFL-CIO; Lawrence-Haverhill-Newburyport Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO (Greater); New Bedford and Cape Cod Labor Council, AFL-CIO (Greater); North Shore Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Pioneer Valley Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Plymouth-Bristol Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

**Michigan:** Bay County Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Detroit AFL-CIO, Metropolitan; Kent-Ionia Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Traverse Bay Area Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

**Minnesota:** Duluth AFL-CIO Central Body; Minneapolis Central Labor Union Council, AFL-CIO; St. Paul AFL-CIO Trades and Labor Assembly.

**Missouri:** Kansas City Labor Council, AFL-CIO (Greater); St. Louis Labor Council, AFL-CIO (Greater).

**Montana:** Big Sky Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Central Montana Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Eastern Montana Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Flathead Area Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Missoula Area Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Southwestern Montana Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Yellowstone Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO (Greater).

**Nebraska:** Lincoln Central Labor Union, AFL-CIO; Omaha Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO.

**Nevada:** North Eastern Nevada Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Southern Nevada Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

**New Jersey:** Atlantic and Cape May Counties Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Bergen County Central Trades and Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Burlington County Central Labor Union, AFL-CIO; Mercer

County Labor Union Council, AFL-CIO; Monmouth and Ocean Counties Central Labor Union, AFL-CIO; Passaic County Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Southern New Jersey Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Union County AFL-CIO Council.

**New Mexico:** Four Corners Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Northern New Mexico Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

**New York:** Albany Central Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO; Buffalo AFL-CIO Council; Dutchess County Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; New York City Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Rochester and Vicinity Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Syracuse Labor Council, AFL-CIO (Greater); Westchester/Putnam Counties AFL-CIO Central Labor Body.

**North Carolina:** Cape Fear Central Labor Union, AFL-CIO (Greater); Charlotte Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Tri-Ad Central Labor Body Union, AFL-CIO; Triangle Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Western North Carolina Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

**North Dakota:** Missouri Slope Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Northern Plains United Labor Council; Northern Valley Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

**Ohio:** Cincinnati AFL-CIO Labor Council; Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor; Columbiana County AFL-CIO Labor Council; Dayton, Springfield, Sidney, Miami Valley AFL-CIO Regional Labor Council; Toledo Area AFL-CIO Council; Wayne-Holmes Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

**Oklahoma:** Central Oklahoma AFL-CIO Labor Council; Northeastern Oklahoma Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

**Oregon:** Lane County Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Northwest Oregon Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Southern Oregon Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

**Pennsylvania:** Allegheny County Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Beaver County AFL-CIO, Labor Council of; Blair-Bedford Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Bucks County Federation of Trade and Industrial Council of Pennsylvania, AFL-CIO; Butler County United Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Fayette County Central Labor Union, AFL-CIO;

Johnstown Regional Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Montgomery County AFL-CIO Union Council; Philadelphia Council of the AFL-CIO; Reading & Berks County AFL-CIO, United Labor Council of; Westmoreland County Labor Union Council, AFL-CIO (Greater).

**South Carolina:** Charleston Labor Council, AFL-CIO (Greater).

**Tennessee:** Knoxville-Oak Ridge Area CLC, AFL-CIO; Nashville and Middle Tennessee AFL-CIO Central Labor Council.

**Texas:** Dallas AFL-CIO Council; Harris County Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; San Antonio AFL-CIO Council.

**Utah:** Central Utah Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO.

**Virginia:** Northern Virginia Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Roanoke United Central Labor Union, AFL-CIO; Tidewater Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO (Greater).

**Washington:** Clark, Skamania and West Klickitat Counties AFL-CIO, Central Labor Council of; King County Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Kitsap County Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; North Central Washington Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Pierce County Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Snohomish County Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Southeastern Washington Labor Council; Spokane Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Yakima South Central Counties Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

**West Virginia:** Marion County AFL-CIO; Monongalia-Preston Labor Council, AFL-CIO; North Central West Virginia Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Southwestern District Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

**Wisconsin:** Fox Valley Area Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Kenosha AFL-CIO; Milwaukee County Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Rock County Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; South Central Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO.

**Wyoming:** Casper Area Trades and Labor Assembly, AFL-CIO.

**Central labor councils  
committed to becoming  
a Union City.**







